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**Note to ID Team: Look for highlighted text for instructions and clarification**
**Questions/concerns/uncertainties/comments or incomplete**

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This would be a good place to insert photographs

# Chapter 2 – Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

## 2.1 Introduction to Chapter 2

Note to Readers: The Green Highlights are from the Shipley book and are things that need to be included. Read this information prior to completing edits.

The yellow highlights are questions or concerns noted by Mary or Mike and need to be addressed.

When editing please use a color so edits can be tracked and put a date at the beginning of your sections so we can track. Place markers for date have been included. If you review/edit the work of others please include your name and date.

This is still a very preliminary draft and won't be complete until reviews by the Tribes/ICG/RAC/County and Public have been completed and appropriate changes are made.

This document will be put in 2 columns once edits are complete

Explain that this chapter both describes the alternatives (potential actions) and compares the alternatives in terms of their environmental impacts (from Section 1.6) and their achievement of objectives (from Section 1.3)

- Remind readers that this chapter does more than merely describe the alternatives. As the CEQ guidance in Section 1502.14 emphasizes, the heart of this chapter is to sharply define the differences between the alternatives, especially how their environmental impacts differ.
- Refer to the interdisciplinary nature of the alternatives and to the role of the interdisciplinary approach throughout this critical step in the NEPA process. This still needs some work .

Explain the process you used to generate the alternatives and provide a rationale for your belief that the alternatives represent a range of reasonable alternatives. As appropriate, briefly describe alternatives eliminated from detailed study and explain why they were eliminated. This still needs some work – especially on the alternatives eliminated

2.1.1 Review for readers the conceptual linkage between the need and the project objectives (the purpose), the relevant (significant) environmental issues; and the range of reasonable alternatives to be presented. This hasn't been done

2.1.2 Briefly discuss how the ID team arrived at decisions about what constitutes reasonable alternatives. As part of this discussion, describe alternatives discarded during the analysis process. If necessary, provide detailed information in a separate appendix and be sure to retain

documentation of such decisions in your analysis file. This has been done for the most part – also see Chapter 1 (I think)

2.1.3 A range of alternatives is a key legal requirement, so failing to describe the range can be a critical omission. **Reasonable alternatives are those that are technically implementable, whether by your agency or by other agencies or private groups.**

2.1.4 Compare the alternatives by summarizing how they differ in regard to both their resource impacts (from Chapter 4) and their achievement of objectives. This comparison of the alternatives is the most important section of Chapter 2. As CEQ Regulations Section 1502.14 emphasizes, this comparison should clearly display the potential impacts, especially impacts that would help readers understand project and resource tradeoffs within each alternative. This has sorta been done but needs some additional work – can't complete until Chapter 4 has been complete

2.1.5 Identify your agency's preferred alternative. Do not give the rationale for your choice. Will do this after public meetings and when we know what it is – after the analysis in Chapter 4.

2.1.6 For a Draft EIS, identify your agency's preferred alternative, unless another law prohibits such identification. The purpose is to tell readers of the Draft EIS what the agency is currently planning to do. This identification allows readers to comment substantively on the agency's likely choice. The agency must respond to these comments when it issues its Final EIS.

2.1.7 Do not include the rationale for the chosen, selected, or preferred alternative. The rationale belongs, instead, in the Record of Decision. If the EIS is carefully written, the decision maker can choose any one of the alternatives without requiring a change in the document.. For an EIS, only the single sentence identifying the preferred alternative would change.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) developed management alternatives for the Bruneau Planning Area (BPA) using public responses to newsletters, comments from the BLM planning website, public meetings, as well as ideas from staff and cooperators. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations and BLM resource management planning regulations require the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives that seek to address identified planning issues and management concerns. Each alternative must be evaluated to ensure that it would be consistent with the area's purpose and need; is consisten with current laws, regulations, and policy; and would make progress toward achieving the desired future condition (DFC).

A range of objectives and management actions were developed for resources related to identified issues and the alternatives differ mainly in the timeframe needed to achieve the DFC. The range of alternatives respond to a variety of human demands and, under all alternatives, provides for improving and sustaining natural and socio-economic resources. Decisions from the existing land use plans that are still valid have been carried forward.

Each alternative addresses these DFCs to some degree and in varying amounts of time; not all will meet the goals equally. In addition, each alternative meets criteria outlined in BLMs land use planning regulations, which requires that each alternative be a complete Resource Management Plan for the public land. Each alternatives must:

- be reasonable;
- provide for a mix of resource protection, management use, and development;
- be responsible to the issues (each issue must be addressed in at least one alternative);

- meet BLM specific program requirements for the range of alternatives; and
- be consistent with the planning criteria.

The DFCs portray the land, resource, or social and economic conditions that are expected in 20+ years if management objectives are achieved. This is a vision of the long-term condition of the ecosystem. A complete list of the Desired Future Conditions for the BPA can be found in Chapter 1.

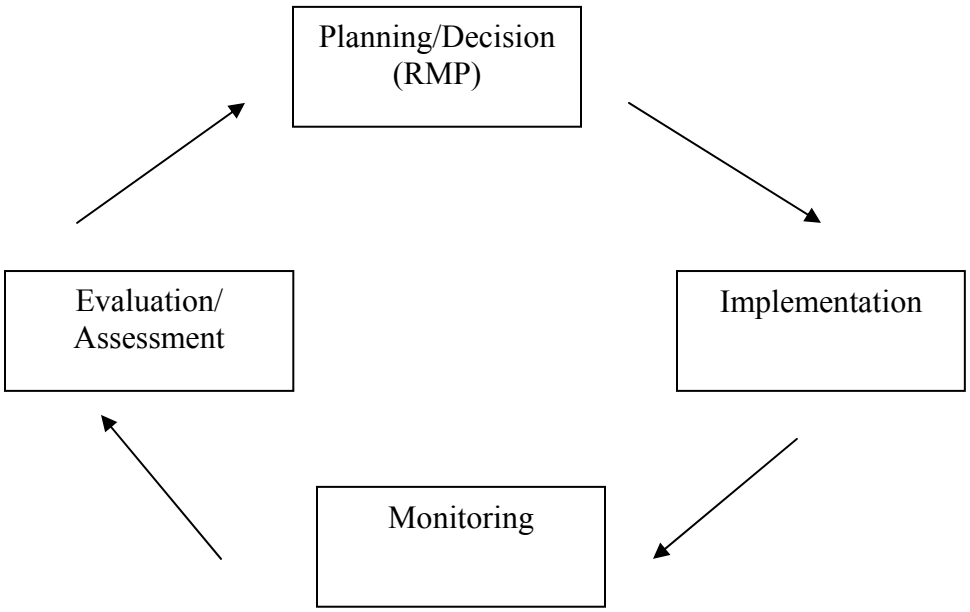
The objectives and management actions may vary across the alternatives but all have the ultimate goal of meeting the DFCs. Objectives are generally measurable and are intended to be the "pathway" to achieving the Desired Future Condition. Objectives form the basis for monitoring our effectiveness in making progress toward the DFC and are generally measurable. Objectives are intended to be the "pathway" to achieving the DFCs and form the basis for monitoring effectiveness in making progress toward the DFC.

## 2.2 Implementation through Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a continuing process of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to adjust management strategies to meet DFC and objectives. A continual feedback loop allows for mid-course correction in management to. develops and public desires change.

The concept of adaptive management uses the latest scientific information and professional judgment and a structured monitoring strategy to select the management that will most likely meet DFCs and objectives. The concept acknowledges the need to manage resources under circumstances that contain varying degrees of uncertainty and the need to adjust to new information.

Adaptive management is a flow of actions that can be depicted as the continuous circle shown in the Figure below.



The following briefly describes the four parts of adaptive management:

1. **Planning/Decision (RMP):** Plan development or revision is the process leading to decision making. It starts with issue identification and DFC development. The next step is to gather information necessary to develop alternatives for management direction that address the issues and DFCs. The final stage of planning is to develop alternative management strategies to address issues and meet objectives, analyze the consequences of the alternatives, and choose a preferred alternative for implementation.

   The Draft BPA RMP/EIS is consistent with the scientific information developed in the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP).

   Objectives are defined as indicators used to measure progress toward attainment of goals. They address short and long-term actions taken to meet goals and the DFCs. Unless otherwise stated, all objectives listed here are assumed to be implemented within 20 years.

2. **Implementation:** The process of putting plans and decisions into effect. See Chapter 8 Monitoring and Implementation. Following the adoption of the RMP, many of the actions identified will require implementation plans such as a management plan for an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). These plans will provide the site specific management emphasis necessary to fully achieve the RMP objectives for that area.

3. **Monitoring:** Should detect trends that are not moving toward the DFC early enough so management activities can be modified to work toward achieving DFCs and objectives should this be necessary. Monitoring data provide information on the condition and trend of the ecosystem and indicate if DFC and objectives are being met. They can identify management strategies that appear to be working in the short term and help identify long-term strategies.

4. **Evaluation/Assessment:** The point where plans and monitoring data are reviewed. This phase of adaptive management is used to judge the success of existing actions in meeting objectives and making progress toward achieving the DFC; makes recommendations for mid-course corrections; and helps set priorities for management. The understanding gained through a comprehensive review of all the monitoring data is critical to managing sustainable, healthy, and productive ecosystems.

   Minor changes, refinements, or clarifications in the plan are maintenance actions that incorporate data changes. Plan maintenance actions will not expand the scope of resource uses or restrictions or change the terms, conditions, or decisions of the approved NCA RMP/EIS. Maintenance actions are not considered plan amendments and do not require formal public involvement and interagency coordination.

## 2.3 Profile of the Four Alternatives

These profiles should summarize actions, outputs, and all required mitigations (Note: Under No Action, summarize relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. This summary prepares readers for possible cumulative impacts.

- Make your profiles as site-specific as possible. Your goal is to show to the decision maker and readers exactly what would happen on the ground if a particular alternative were implemented.
- Describe each alternative as it would be. **Do not use will**

The Draft EIS analyzes four alternatives that were determined to address the range of reasonable alternatives meeting or making significant progress toward achieving the DFC. Each alternative consists of three key elements.

- The first is the theme, ranging from an emphasis on commodity uses with a slower level of habitat restoration to an emphasis on habitat restoration being the highest priority.
- The second element is the objectives. These are the measurable intermediate step used to determine progress toward achieving the DFC. Many of the objectives are fully integrated and address multiple resource values.
- The third element is the management action. These are specific actions to be taken to achieve the objective. The management actions are resource or activity specific and when looked at in total, represent the integrated actions to be taken to achieve an objective. All three elements may vary between the alternatives. The overall themes determine the type of management actions to be used in each alternative.

All the alternatives generally achieve the DFC. However, there are differences in how fast the DFC and objectives are being met, the priorities within the objective, and the emphasis placed on different activities.

The DFC and many of the objectives may not be completely met over the life of the plan (up to 20 years). Funding and staff levels, changes in technology and changes in natural conditions such as drought would affect rates of improvement or change.

The alternatives are presented here in two formats. The first is the narrative write-up organized by resource program and discusses each of the alternatives based on that program. This discussion provides the rationale for the objectives and management actions. The second section is a table that provides a comparison of the alternatives by objective and management action. A third table shows all the special designations proposed and the difference between their management actions. This section helps the reader to see the overall differences between the alternatives. There is also a table showing the summary of anticipated impacts to resources of each alternative. The detailed discussion of the environmental and socio-economic impacts of each alternative is presented in Chapter 4.

## 2.4 Alternatives Considered

**Alternative A** – Current Management (No Action) – based on the existing Management Framework Plan, policy and regulations. The MFP does not contain NEPA compliance documentation and doesn't address OHV or other areas in sufficient detail. The rates of recovery would be moderate in riparian areas, and slow for upland areas. Sensitive species habitats would be maintained with a slow recovery of upland habitats. Livestock grazing would be addressed through a mix of new projects and grazing management practices and there would be little emphasis on OHV management.

**Alternative B** - Maintain natural resources with an emphasis on multiple uses. The alternative would provide for long-term improvement of sensitive species habitats, slow upland and riparian area recovery, an increase in motorized OHV emphasis and an increase in range improvements for livestock management.

**Alternative C** - Emphasize improvement and restoration of natural resources. This alternative wouldl maintain or provide for short-term improvement of sensitive species, moderate-long term upland recovery, short-term riparian recovery, range management projects focused on restoration and increased emphasis of non-motorized recreation.

**Alternative D** - Improve natural resources while continuing multiple uses. This alternative would maintain or provide for mid-term improvement of sensitive species, moderate-long term upland recovery, mid-term riparian recovery, range management projects split between restoration and livestock management and a balance (mix) of non-motorized and motorized recreation.

## 2.5 Alternatives Considered but Dropped

- No Grazing Alternative – Livestock grazing is a compatible use of public lands under existing law, regulation, and policy. The RMP will identify areas that are not suitable for livestock grazing. However, an alternative considering no grazing is not consistent with existing law, regulation, and policy and therefore was dropped from consideration.
- Special Designations – Several ACEC proposals were received from a variety of interested public and cooperating agencies. These proposals were evaluated using the relevance and importance criteria as described in law (FLPMA 2001, as amended), regulation (43 CFR II 1610.7-2), and policy (BLM Manual 1613). Proposals which failed to meet relevance and importance criteria were dropped from further consideration.
- Wilderness Study Areas - Because of a change in Bureau policy in 2003, new wilderness study areas not originally identified under Section 603 of FLPMA cannot be subsequently identified during land use planning efforts under Section 202 of FLPMA, as was formerly the case. However, more recent policy clarifications have suggested that lands outside currently identified WSAs that possess wilderness qualities can have those values protected by means other than WSA status, (e.g. ACECs, SRMAs, or ROS classifications). Because of the recent policy clarifications, BLM has not had time to analyze proposals from citizens groups to protect additional acreage with wilderness characteristics, but that effort is now underway.

Any others?

## 2.6 Alternative Discussion

### 2.6.1 Air Quality

**Common to All Alternatives:** The air resource program would be managed in the same general manner in all alternatives in accordance with policies, laws, and regulations with the goal of meeting current standards. Consequently, the management of air resources will not be addressed again in other alternatives.

**Objective:** In accordance with the planning criteria and the Clean Air Act, all authorized actions would meet or exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the Prevention of Significant Deterioration regulations.

**Description and Rationale:** The "Interim Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fires" issued by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency on April 23, 1998 directs public land managers to protect public health and welfare by mitigating the impacts of air pollutant emissions on air quality and visibility for all wildland and prescribed fires managed to achieve resource values.

**Management common to all alternatives:** Prior to the actual ignition of any prescribed fire, an approved prescribed burn plan would be in place and adhered to throughout the project. The burn plan would include information and techniques used to reduce or alter smoke emission levels. Information (including resource objectives, acres to be burned, fuel types, fuel moisture, fuel loading, fuel continuity, topography, locations of population centers and Class 1 air sheds) assists fire managers in determining what weather conditions, firing methods, and mop-up standards should be used to minimize impacts. The majority of fuel types in the planning area do not allow for opportunities to reduce emissions; therefore,

emissions would be managed by timing and atmospheric dispersal. All prescribed fire actions would be coordinated with other affected agencies.

Emissions from point and nonpoint sources would be limited by requiring and implementing mitigation measures and Standard Operating Practices (SOPs). An example of a point source would be emissions from a smoke stack. Many point sources are specifically regulated by State agencies. Examples of nonpoint sources are the dust from a haul road and an SOP for that scenario could be to apply water or limit the number of runs per day or the speed limit.

### 2.6.2 Cultural and Tribal Resources

Federal Cultural Resource Management has been evolving for the past 30 years, and is guided by many laws, executive orders, regulations and policies beginning in 1906 with the Antiquities Act. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that a mandatory compliance process be carried out prior to implementing any federally funded or authorized activity.

**Description and Rationale:**

**Common to All Alternatives:**

Since all the RMP Alternatives must meet this minimum level of compliance, the Alternatives are differentiated by varying levels of proactive cultural resource management that would occur, such as additional cultural resource surveys, additional site impact monitoring, stabilization of sites, protection or salvage of impacted sites, research conducted at appropriate sites, and the creation of interpretive projects that would extend beyond the minimum Section 106 compliance actions.

All known cultural resources and any cultural resources discovered in the future would be assigned one of the following Cultural Resource Use categories. The categories help define the type and level of future management that would be applied to specific resources or sites.

- Scientific Use,
- Conservation for Future Use,
- Traditional Use,
- Public Use,
- Experimental Use, and
- Discharged from Management.

**Alternative A:** The No Action Alternative would meet minimum legal and regulatory requirements, and policy mandates that apply to cultural resource management. Some proactive cultural resource management actions would be implemented, including environmental education and interpretive programs to heighten public awareness of the value of cultural resources.

Adverse impacts to cultural resources would be mitigated with site avoidance, fencing, or other agreed upon mitigation measures. Redesignation of the existing ACECs would help protect and enhance cultural resources.

**Alternative B:** This alternative would be similar to Alternative A, except additional proactive cultural resource management actions over a broader area based on acreage in special management areas such as ACEC's and National Register Historic Districts; additional proactive cultural resource surveys, cultural resource site monitoring, cultural resource interpretation and public outreach projects would be implemented. By educating the general public about the need to protect important cultural resources the BLM would increase surveillance and reporting capability. A Class I Overview would be completed within five years of completion of the RMP. Designation of five new ACECs, expansion of the Mud Flat

Oolite ACEC, and redesignation of the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would help protect and enhance cultural resources.

**Alternative C:** This alternative would be managed as identified in Alternative B and would implement additional proactive cultural resource management actions over a broader area based on acreage in special management areas such as ACEC's and National Register Historic Districts; additional proactive cultural resource surveys, cultural resource site monitoring, cultural resource interpretation and public outreach projects would be implemented. A Class I Overview would be completed within five years of completion of the RMP. Designation of nine new ACECs, expansion of the Mud Flat Oolite ACEC, and redesignation of the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would help protect and enhance cultural resources.

**Alternative D:** This alternative would be the same as Alternative B, except for a difference in acreage for special management areas. Designation of six new ACECs, expansion of the Mud Flat Oolite ACEC, and redesignation of the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would help protect and enhance cultural resources.

### 2.6.3 Fish and Wildlife

FLPMA places management of fish and wildlife habitats on equal footing with other traditional land uses; requires that a portion of grazing fees be invested in improvement of resource conditions, including enhancement, protection, and maintenance of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats; and requires consideration of fish and wildlife resources before approval of land exchanges.

BLM policy directs the agency to ensure that habitats of sensitive animals are managed and conserved to minimize the need for listing as threatened or endangered.

The Clean Water Act and State of Idaho water quality standards prescribe that BLM implement best management practices to support beneficial uses such as cold water aquatic life and recreation.

Executive orders for floodplains management and protection of wetlands provide further direction for protection and management of wildlife and fisheries habitat.

#### 2.6.3.1 Fisheries (including Special Status Species)

**Management Common to All Alternatives**:
Under all alternatives, floodplains and riparian areas associated with streams inhabited by redband trout and potentially inhabited by bull trout would be identified as Riparian Conservation Areas (RCA's). Livestock grazing within these RCA's would be managed to increase stream shade and streambank cover to minimize the need to list redband trout as endangered or threatened and improve potential habitat for bull trout. Mountain whitefish populations would also benefit from management actions implemented to improve stream habitats for redband trout and bull trout.

The condition of aquatic and riparian habitats within RCA's would be examined as part of grazing allotment evaluations. BLM would revise or develop new management plans for grazing allotments where evaluations show habitat standards for redband trout (Table Fish-1) are not being met. Management plans would implement grazing practices that provide sufficient residual vegetation to shade stream channels, provide cover, capture sediment, and stabilize stream banks to improve redband trout habitat to good condition. Where redband trout habitat is already meeting habitat standards, grazing practices would be maintained or changed as necessary to maintain good condition habitats.

Redband trout abundance increases significantly with habitat condition rating (B. Zoellick and B. Cade, unpublished data, 2004). Therefore, trout habitat objectives based on the BLM habitat rating system (Table Fish-1) provide site-specific guidance regarding what stream conditions to manage for, regardless of whether improvement in habitat condition is required because of natural disturbance from high flows, or because of declines in condition resulting from land-use activities. However, the range of values defining habitat conditions (Table Fish-1) allow for some fluctuation in condition resulting from natural disturbances. Additionally, observations from the past ten years indicate fluctuations in habitat condition resulting from natural disturbances such as high runoff events are infrequent and comprise only about 1% of the streams on the planning area at any given time. An advantage of BLM's habitat rating system is its inherent flexibility, which allows its application to a wide range of stream types (i.e. large streams such as the Owyhee River, confined canyon streams with streambank vegetation dominated by willows, and low gradient meadow streams), all of which have the potential to be rated in good condition under the BLM habitat rating system. For example, for streams such as the Owyhee River with scouring flows that limit the development of riparian shrub communities and consequently riparian shading, the habitat rating system provides guidance regarding what other habitat features to manage for (such as bank and channel stability) to minimize the negative impact of limited levels of stream shading on stream temperature.

Streams supporting populations of warm-water fish (native fishes other than redband trout, bull trout, and mountain whitefish) would be managed to be in proper functioning condition. Management actions discussed in Stream Riparian section under the vegetation objective would be implemented to improve stream habitats for warm-water fishes.

Canyons (except those segments that comprise the major portion of a pasture) would be closed to livestock grazing (Grazing Map 1) to provide quality aquatic and riparian habitats for redband trout, bull trout, and other sensitive species. All of the Bruneau River canyon that provides potential habitat for bull trout would be closed to livestock grazing. Riparian restoration plantings would be used where feasible to restore highly degraded stream and fisheries habitats. Highly degraded stream and redband trout habitats would be restored by stabilizing steambanks and channels with natural revetment materials where feasible. OHV trails following stream channels supporting riparian vegetation would be closed.

**Alternative A:** The objective for this alternative is to maintain 120 miles and improve 90 miles of stream to good condition for redband trout in 20 years (Map Fish-3).

Subsequent to the issuance of the 1983 land use plan, BLM and IDFG further delineated the distribution of redband trout in southwest Idaho. Currently, over 300 miles of stream are known to be inhabited by redband trout in the planning area, of which 210 miles are located on lands managed by BLM (Map Fish-2). The habitat objective under Alternative A has been updated from that in the Bruneau Management Framework Plan (MFP) (USDI 1983 - MFP is not paginated) to reflect the total miles of stream inhabited by redband trout and current habitat conditions.

Under this alternative, habitats of redband trout would be improved primarily through the adjustment of grazing management practices in RCA's. Grazing practices would be adjusted for individual allotments as part of Rangeland Health Assessments and implementation of Idaho Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Standards and Guides). In general, if RCA's are grazed, they would primarily be grazed during the spring, or under rotational grazing systems that generally limit hot season grazing to a frequency of no more than one year out of four.

If changes in grazing management practices do not improve riparian and aquatic habitat conditions, then livestock grazing would be excluded from RCA's on 94 miles of stream until redband trout habitat standards are met. Grazing could then resume upon achievement of habitat objectives and continue as long as habitat conditions are maintained.

Rate of habitat improvement would be slow (meet objectives in 20 years) because about 5 years would be required just to complete Rangeland Health Assessments and issue new grazing permits that comply with Standards and Guides, and because few stream segments would be rested from livestock grazing to speed improvement of habitats.

As part of Rangeland Health Assessments, inventories would be conducted of roads located in RCA's and their effect on riparian and aquatic habitats. Under this alternative no poorly located or constructed roads would be closed. However, stream channels and floodplains would be restored as best as possible where roads have captured stream flows.

**Alternative B:** The objective for this alternative would be the same as Alternative A

All habitats currently inhabited by redband trout would be maintained or improved to good condition over a 20 year period similar to Alternative A. However, this alternative would prioritize the maintenance and improvement of stream habitats through designation of population strongholds and identification of core habitats that are important for the maintenance or expansion of existing redband trout populations (Map Fish-4).

The first priority for management of redband trout habitat would be the maintenance and improvement of redband habitats in watersheds designated as population strongholds (i.e. Little Jacks, Big Jacks, Duncan, and Cottonwood Creek watersheds, Thurow et al. 1997, pp.1099-1102; Map Fish-4). The proposed Jacks Creek ACEC would help meet this objective.

The next priority would be maintenance or improvement of redband trout habitats in designated core areas in several upper Bruneau River watersheds, including the Marys Creek, Pole Creek, and upper Sheep Creek watersheds, the upper Louse Creek watershed, several Snake River tributary watersheds, and additionally the lower and middle Pole Creek watersheds in the Owyhee River basin (Map Fish-4). The proposed Bruneau River and Camas Creek-Pole Creek ACECs would help meet this objective.

Under this alternative, habitats of redband trout would also be improved primarily through the adjustment of grazing management practices in RCA's. Grazing practices would be adjusted for individual allotments as part of Rangeland Health Assessments and implementation of Idaho Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Standards and Guides). Under Alternative B, temporary fencing would be used to rest high priority RCA's (≤15 miles of stream) from livestock grazing in core areas or watersheds supporting population strongholds until habitat standards are met for redband trout.

Overall, habitats would primarily be improved through the implementation of new grazing systems that conform to Idaho Standards and Guides. Rates of habitat improvement for streams impacted by livestock grazing would be slow and similar to that of Alternative A.

As part of Rangeland Health Assessments, inventories would be conducted of roads located in RCA's and their effect on riparian and aquatic habitats. Roads negatively impacting channels or floodplains would be closed if possible or their impacts mitigated.

**Alternative C:** The objective for this alternative is to maintain 120 miles and improve 90 miles of stream to good condition for redband trout in 10 years (Map Fish-3), and reconnect isolated or fragmented trout habitat by improving to good condition 35 miles of stream located between areas currently inhabited by redband trout (Fish Map-5).

This alternative would also prioritize the maintenance and improvement of redband trout habitats through the designation of population strongholds and identification of core habitats for redband trout as that in Alternative B (Map Fish-4). The proposed Bruneau River, Camas Creek-Pole Creek, and Jacks Creek ACECs would help meet this objective. Although not within a core watershed, the proposed Castle Creek ACEC would assist in meeting the redband trout habitat objective.

Habitats of redband trout impacted by livestock grazing would also be improved through the adjustment of grazing management practices in RCA's to be consistent with Standards and Guides similar to that of Alternatives A and B. However, under Alternative C, RCA's not meeting habitat objectives would be rested from livestock grazing until habitat standards are met. RCA's would be rested from livestock grazing either through the use of temporary fencing or temporary closing of pastures to livestock grazing. Hence, habitat objectives for redband trout would be met more quickly (over a 10 year period) than that under Alternatives A and B.

Additionally, under this alternative RCA's would be expanded to include approximately 35 miles of stream located between isolated or fragmented redband trout habitats. These additional RCA's would be managed to improve the amount and distribution of redband trout habitat to increase the sustainability of isolated redband trout populations.

Finally, this alternative would include an inventory and assessment of all RCA's for potential actions to restore habitats or redband trout populations impacted by obstructions, roads, or exotic fish introductions. Current known restoration priorities for redband trout populations that would minimally be addressed under this alternative include 1) replacing culverts known to be fish barriers including one on Wickahoney Creek, 2) closing, relocating, or mitigating the negative impacts of roads located in floodplains of RCA's, 3) examining the Pole Creek watershed in the upper Bruneau River for opportunities to improve watershed health, 4) assisting IDFG with evaluating the efficacy of operating a weir on Pole Creek in the Owyhee River basin to prevent smallmouth bass emigration to lower and middle segments of Pole Creek.

**Alternative D:** This objective for this alternative is to maintain 120 miles and improve 90 miles of stream to good condition for redband trout in 10 years (Map Fish-3).

This alternative would also prioritize the maintenance and improvement of redband trout habitats through the designation of population strongholds and identification of core habitats for redband trout as that in Alternatives B and C (Map Fish-4). The proposed Bruneau River, Camas Creek-Pole Creek, and Jacks Creek ACECs would help meet this objective. Although not within a core watershed, the proposed Castle Creek ACEC would assist in meeting the redband trout habitat objective.

Habitats of redband trout impacted by livestock grazing would also be improved through the adjustment of grazing management practices in RCA's to be consistent with Standards and Guides. Some RCA's (≥25 miles of stream) not meeting habitat objectives would be rested from livestock grazing until habitat standards are met. RCA's would be rested from livestock grazing primarily through the use of temporary fencing. Habitat objectives for redband trout would be met more quickly (over a 15 year period) than that under Alternatives A and B, but not as quickly as that under Alternative C.

Similar to Alternative C, all RCA's would be inventoried and assessed for potential actions to restore habitats or redband trout populations impacted by obstructions, roads, or exotic fish introductions. Under this Alternative, restoration actions taken to benefit redband trout populations would minimally include 1) removing a culvert on Wickahoney Creek that is a barrier to fish passage, 2) closing, relocating, or mitigating the negative impacts of roads located in floodplains of RCA's, 3) examining the Pole Creek watershed in the upper Bruneau River for opportunities to improve watershed health.

### 2.6.3.2 Wildlife (including Special Status Species)

**Common to All Alternatives:**

Managing for good condition upland and riparian vegetation is the basis of managing for wildlife, combined with controlling human disturbances. The two primary human activities the BLM manages in the BPA, and which have the most potential to affect wildlife and fish habitat, are livestock grazing and off-road-vehicle use. Therefore the objectives and management actions for these activities, listed under Grazing, Vegetation, and Recreation, are all intertwined with managing habitat for fish and wildlife, and the reader must examine these to see the full picture of managing for wildlife. Often objectives and management actions listed under wildlife deal with specific actions that could affect various species, such disturbances near sage grouse leks, or water developments near the canyon rim in bighorn sheep habitat.

For sensitive species, their habitats would be managed to maintain existing habitat quality or improve habitat quality where evaluations show deficiencies to prevent these species from being federally listed (or reduce the possibility). Thus, management actions to protect and enhance sensitive species are necessary similar across all alternatives. Examples are sage grouse habitat being high priority for fire suppression, making bighorn sheep management the priority for the canyons that are bighorn sheep habitat, and retaining sensitive species habitat in public ownership. The proposed ACECs would help protect and enhance habitat for a wide range of wildlife including several sensitive species.

Similarly under all alternatives, habitats of federally threatened or endangered wildlife species would be managed similarly. Fences that exclude from grazing all habitat of the Bruneau hot springsnail on federal lands would continue to be maintained. Bruneau hot springsnail habitat would be periodically monitored to ensure recreationist use of hot springs is not impacting springsnails or their habitat. The proposed Bruneau River ACEC would help maintain springsnail habitat. Habitat quality for the Idaho springsnail in the Snake River and C.J. Strike Reservoir would be at a minimum maintained, by ensuring activities under BLM control do not impact Idaho springsnails or their habitat.

Upland and riparian vegetation would be improved by implementing Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health, which guide grazing management. The Idaho Standards allow for adaptive management. Each allotment and pasture is analyzed as part of the grazing permit renewal process, and changes made as necessary if it is determined that current grazing practices are the cause of not meeting a standard. The standards for native vegetation communities and for riparian areas are adequate standards for healthy wildlife habitat, and managing for achieving these standards would in general provide a healthy landscape for a broad range of wildlife species.

**Differences Among Alternatives**

The main element that is not fully prescribed in the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health is the rate of change towards meeting the standards, although "significant progress" is required. Thus, we have used rate of improvement, where improvement is needed, as one varying factor across alternatives (Table Wildlife-A). In general, riparian areas can improve at faster rates than uplands. In uplands, the rate of change would vary depending on the capability of the land. In communities where the native species are still present in good frequencies but production is low, and these occur usually at higher elevations where there is more moisture, increases in production and vigor to potential might be relatively fast, depending of course on annual rainfall. In communities where native species are gone or in very low frequencies, usually the lower elevation communities which are dryer, increases in production would probably never reach original potential, and would take longer to reach current potential.

Table Wildlife-A. Timeline (average # years) for achieving the objectives and goals under each alternative.

| | *Ecological State* | A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Riparian** | **Non-Functioning** | 25 | 35 | 20 | 20 |
| | **Functioning At Risk -low** | 20 | 25 | 15 | 15 |
| | **Functioning At Risk - mid** | 15 | 20 | 10 | 10 |
| | **Functioning At Risk - high** | 10 | 15 | 5 | 10 |
| **Uplands** | **Low Elevation- Altered** | 35 | 50 | 20 | 25 |
| | **High Elevaton- Altered** | 20 | 25 | 15 | 20 |

**Alternative A:** This alternative describes the current management. For grazing, it is based on implementing the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. For OHV's the area is open other than in WSA's, and the exponential increase in the use of these vehicles has caused a proliferation of roads into wildlife habitat. This alternative would not provide limits on OHV use.

**Alternative B:** In grazing management, Alternative B attempts to minimize the amount of change for ranchers, but still allow for improvement where needed and possible. The rate of improvement would be slower, because the amount of change in grazing management would be less. More reliance would be placed on using fences and water developments to manage grazing, and less emphasis on changes in season, duration, numbers, or increases in active herding. In some instances, there may be a threshold for amount of change, below which it might be difficult to detect any difference on the ground. For example, if the season of use remains during the critical period every year, with only a slight adjustment in duration or numbers, change on the ground may not be enough to improve to the goal. The proposed Bruneau River and Jacks Creek ACECs would help meet objectives for bighorn sheep.

**Alternative C:** This alternative calls for the fastest rates of improvement in habitat conditions for wildlife, while allowing for continued multiple use. It tries to optimize habitat for sage grouse. When choices need to be made among competing interests, maintaining or improving native habitats would have higher priority than commodity production.

The focus would be on improving those areas with the greatest potential for improvement first. Areas in lower condition would be lower priority. Animals do not use the landscape randomly. They choose areas with the most food, shelter, etc., and thus by focusing on the better condition areas with the most potential for improvement, we would be focusing on the areas most important for wildlife also. For example, the proposed Bruneau River, Castle Creek, and Jacks Creek ACECs would help meet objectives for bighorn sheep. Large areas dominated by cheatgrass would be low priority for improvement or restoration; however, areas with intact native vegetation would have a higher priority for maintenance or improvement. At lower elevations, proposed ACECs (Biological Soil Crusts, Bruneau River, Castle Creek, Horse Hill, Mulford's Milkvetch, and Sugar Valley Badlands) would help maintain some areas of intact wildlife habitat. Riparian areas that still have the basic vegetation elements would have higher priority for improvement than areas without sedges or shrubs.

**Alternative D:** This alternative calls for moderate rates of improvement in habitat conditions for wildlife, while allowing for continued multiple use. Key habitats for sage grouse would be maintained or improved. Maintaining or improving native habitats would be balanced with other resource uses.

Similar to Alternative C, the focus would be on improving those areas with the greatest potential for improvement. However, sagebrush cover would be restored to fewer grass dominated areas than under Alternative C. The amount of riparian habitat improvement would similar to Alternative C, but the rate of

recovery would be slightly slower. The proposed ACECs would help maintain or enhance upland and riparian wildlife habitats.

**EXPLANATION OF THE OBJECTIVES AND THE INTENT BEHIND THEM.**

**Big game**

| Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D |
|---|---|---|---|
| Big game habitat would be in *good habitat condition within the life of the plan*, where potential allows, and human uses would be compatible with the needs of wildlife. | Big game habitat would *continue in current condition, at a minimum*. | Big game habitat would be in *good habitat condition within 10 years*, where potential allows, and human uses would be compatible with the needs of wildlife. | Big game habitat would be in *good habitat condition within 15 years*, where potential allows, and human uses would be compatible with the needs of wildlife. |

By good condition, we mean the habitat is providing food, cover, shelter, and undisturbed space for the needs of the animals in all seasons. This means adequate winter and summer browse or grazing, hiding cover, refuges during the hunting season, undisturbed winter and fawning areas. For deer, shrubs, particularly bitterbrush, are key food sources. For elk, grasses are most important. For antelope, forbs are particularly important. For human uses to be compatible, they must minimize disturbance during critical times such as winter or fawning, and they must not degrade the habitat long term, for example, weed introductions or proliferation of roads that reduce or eliminate refuges from motorized hunting.

**Sage grouse**

| Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D |
|---|---|---|---|
| The current extent and quality of breeding, nesting, brood rearing, and winter habitats for sage grouse would be, *at a minimum, maintained, and improved to suitable* where potential exists within the life of the plan..*<br>*see Wildlife Table 1 | The current extent and quality of breeding, nesting, brood rearing, and winter habitats for sage grouse would be *maintained where suitable, or improved where potential exists, over the life of the plan.* | The current extent and quality of breeding, nesting, brood rearing, and winter habitats for sage grouse would be, *at a minimum, maintained, and improved to suitable where potential exists within 10 years for riparian and 15 years for upland habitats..* | The current extent and quality of breeding, nesting, brood rearing, and winter habitats for sage grouse would be, *at a minimum, maintained, and improved to suitable where potential exists within 15 years for riparian and 25 years for upland habitats.* |

The following tables are from the Idaho BLM Framework for assessing sage grouse habitat, and describe suitable habitat in the different seasons.

Table 1. Nesting and early brood-rearing habitat features and indicators for sage grouse habitat.

| **Habitat Feature** | **Indicator** | **Suitable Habitat** | **Marginal Habitat** | **Unsuitable Habitat** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nesting Cover | Big sagebrush canopy cover | ≥ 15% but ≤ 25% | 10-14% or 26-35% | <10% or >35% |
| | | | | |

| Habitat Feature | Indicator | Suitable Habitat | Marginal Habitat | Unsuitable Habitat |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nesting Cover | Big sagebrush ht<br>Mesic site<br>Arid site | <br>15-30 inches<br>12-30 inches | <br>10-14 or 31-40 inches<br>10-11 or >30 in | <br><10 or > 40 inches<br><10 in |
| Nesting Cover | Big sagebrush growth form | Spreading form, few if any dead branches | | Tall, columnar growth form with dead branches |
| Nesting Cover | Herbaceous perennial grass and forb height | ≥ 7 inches | 5 - <7 inches | < 5 inches |
| Nesting Cover & Food | Perennial grass canopy cover<br>Mesic site<br>Arid site | <br>≥ 15%<br>≥10% | <br>5 - <15%<br>5 -<10% | <br><5%<br><5% |
| Nesting Cover & Food | Forb canopy cover<br>Mesic site<br>Arid site | <br>≥ 10%<br>≥ 5% | <br>5 - <10%<br>3 - <5% | <br><5%<br><3% |
| Food | Forb richness[1] | High | Low | Very low |

[1]Relative to ecological site descriptions.

Table 2. Late brood-rearing habitat features and indicators for sage grouse habitat.

| Habitat Feature | Indicator | Suitable Habitat | Marginal | Unsuitable Habitat |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Food | Riparian and wet meadow plant community | Mesic or wetland plant species dominate wet meadow or riparian area | Xeric plant species invading wet meadow or riparian area | Xeric plant species along water's edge or near center of wet meadow |
| Cover and Food | Riparian and wet meadow stability | No erosion evident; some bare ground may be evident but vegetative cover dominates the site | Minor erosion occurring and bare ground may be evident but vegetative cover dominates the site | Major erosion evident; large patches of bare ground |
| Food | Forb availability in uplands | Succulent forbs are readily available in terms of distribution | Succulent forbs are available though distribution is spotty | Succulent forbs are not available due to site condition or plant |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | and wetland areas | and plant structure | or plant structure limits effective use | structure |
| Cover | Proximity of sagebrush cover | Sagebrush cover is adjacent (< 100 yards) to brood-rearing area | Sagebrush cover is in close proximity (100 - 300 yards ) of brood-rearing areas | Sagebrush cover is unavailable (> 300 yards). |

Table 3. Winter habitat features and indicators for sage grouse habitat.

| **Habitat Feature** | **Indicator** | **Suitable Habitat** | **Marginal Habitat** | **Unsuitable Habitat** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cover and Food | Sagebrush canopy cover | 10-30% | 5- 9% or >30% | < 5% |
| Cover and Food | Sagebrush height | Normal height relative to site potential | Hedged shrubs, slightly shorter relative to site potential | Severely hedged shrubs and short relative to site potential |

**Bighorn Sheep**

| Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quality habitat for bighorn sheep would continue to be provided in and would be a priority for the canyonlands and surrounding 1 mi. of uplands of Little Jacks, Battle, and Deep Creeks, the Owyhee River, and the *West Fork of the Bruneau River outside of the Bruneau Canyon Allotment.* | same as Alternative A. | Quality habitat for bighorn sheep would continue to be provided in and would be a priority for the canyonlands and surrounding 1 mi. of uplands of *Big* and Little Jacks, *Duncan, Shoofly, Mary's, Castle*, Battle, and Deep Creeks, the Owyhee River, and the *Bruneau* River *outside of the Bruneau Canyon Allotment,* as shown on Wildlife Map 1. | Quality habitat for bighorn sheep would continue to be provided in and would be a priority for the canyonlands and surrounding 1 mi. of uplands of Big and Little Jacks, Duncan, Shoofly, ~~Mary's,~~ Castle, Battle, and Deep Creeks, the Owyhee River, and the Bruneau River *outside of the Bruneau Canyon Allotment,.a*s shown on Wildlife Map 1. |

Quality habitat for bighorn sheep means secure undisturbed ledges with adequate food and water for lambing habitat, access to cliffs for escape in proximity to forage and water, generally secure habitat from human disturbance, especially during hunting season and lambing season, and freedom from diseases that can be introduced from domestic sheep.

**Pygmy rabbit**

| Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maintain good condition pygmy rabbit habitat. | Minimize long-term reduction of tall thick sagebrush cover in known habitat of pygmy rabbits. | Known and potential pygmy rabbit habitat would continue, over the long term, to have tall, thick, sagebrush suitable for this species, and would be undisturbed by human activities. | Same as Alternative C. |

The key features of pygmy rabbit habitat that are known at this writing are tall thick sage in deep soils appropriate for digging burrows. Their responses to differences in grass and forbs are not known at this time, and so we were not able to address this aspect. Areas where pygmy rabbits occur generally have sagebrush that might be rated as too thick (>30% cover) by other standards, and thus could be targeted for burning or sagebrush thinning. However, these kinds of areas must be assessed for pygmy rabbit occurrence before altering sagebrush, so as not to destroy pygmy rabbit habitat. However, pygmy rabbits occur in the zone where junipers are expanding, which would eventually eliminate their habitat. Thus, the wording of this objective "over the long term" is intended to allow juniper control that temporarily eliminates sagebrush cover, on condition that the long-term effect is to maintain sagebrush cover. Additionally, pygmy rabbits do not hibernate, they are active all winter. When the snow covers the sagebrush, they dig tunnels in the snow to access sagebrush to eat. Along the Mudflat Road, snowmobile tracks have been observed covering habitat of pygmy rabbit populations in the winter. This disturbance factor needs control.

**Spotted and Leopard Frogs**

| Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wetland habitat supporting spotted and leopard frog populations is in PFC within *the life of the plan* (Wildlife Map 5). Current known areas include Birch Creek, South Fork Castle Creek, upper Battle Creek and wetlands adjacent to this stream, Rock creeks (tributaries to Battle and Boulder creeks), and Marys Creek. Pool habitat is maximized where possible. | Wetland habitat supporting spotted and leopard frog populations is in PFC within *20 years* (Wildlife Map 5). Current known areas include Birch Creek, South Fork Castle Creek, upper Battle Creek and wetlands adjacent to this stream, Rock creeks (tributaries to Battle and Boulder creeks), and Marys Creek. Pool habitat is maximized where possible. | Wetland habitat supporting spotted and leopard frog populations is in PFC within *10 years* (Wildlife Map 5). Current known areas include Birch Creek, South Fork Castle Creek, upper Battle Creek and wetlands adjacent to this stream, Rock creeks (tributaries to Battle and Boulder creeks), and Marys Creek. Pool habitat is maximized where possible. | Wetland habitat supporting spotted and leopard frog populations is in PFC within *15 years* (Wildlife Map 5). Current known areas include Birch Creek, South Fork Castle Creek, upper Battle Creek and wetlands adjacent to this stream, Rock creeks (tributaries to Battle and Boulder creeks), and Marys Creek. Pool habitat is maximized where possible. |

Spotted frogs occur where most people think of finding frogs, in ponds, pools and slow water, as opposed to running streams. Creating ponds greatly increased frog populations in Stoneman Creek on the adjacent Owyhee planning unit. Creeks that are in good condition have features that slow water down and create frog habitat: meanders, oxbows, pools created by woody debris, and pools created by marshy edges where sedges have grown in. Aquatic floating vegetation can also provide refuge for tadpoles and frogs from predatory fish. Reintroducing beavers is one way to naturally increase pools along a stream, and before they were hunted out in the 1800's, beavers were a basic feature of streams in the West as a whole.

**Riparian dependent songbirds**

| Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative D |
|---|---|---|---|
| See Streams and Springs objectives | To provide habitat for songbirds, including potentially the yellow-billed including cuckoo, woody riparian habitat that has the potential to be >~50 feet wide and have significant lengths of continuous shrub and tree habitat is at or on a strong upward trend toward potential natural community within 20 years. | To provide habitat for songbirds, potentially the yellow-billed cuckoo, woody riparian habitat that has the potential to be >~50 feet wide and have significant lengths of continuous shrub and tree habitat is at or on a strong upward trend toward potential natural community within 10 years. | To provide habitat for songbirds, including potentially the yellow-billed cuckoo, woody riparian habitat that has the potential to be >~50 feet wide and have significant lengths of continuous shrub and tree habitat is at or on a strong upward trend toward potential natural community within 15 years. |

For riparian dependent songbirds, thick wide shrub and tree habitat provides the best habitat, because it provides the most protection from nest predators. Not all creeks or parts of creeks have the potential to provide this wide habitat, because many streams are naturally narrow. This objective is meant to put emphasis on the highest quality riparian habitat for songbirds, and manage it for its highest potential rather than only for PFC, which may not equal thick wide good songbird habitat. PFC concentrates on physical functioning of the banks. Additionally, this describes the habitat that potentially could be used by the yellow-billed cuckoo, a candidate species not currently known to breed in southwestern Idaho.

### 2.6.4 Geology

Note: Nothing available for Geology – make sure this has been dismissed in the Affected Environment.

### 2.6.5 Paleontology

Note: Nothing available for Paleo – make sure this has been dismissed in the Affected Environment.

### 2.6.6 Special Status Species

#### 2.6.6.1 Special Status Animals

See Fish and Wildlife

### 2.6.6.2 Special Status Plants

**Common to All Alternatives:**

Goals:

- Habitat conditions would contribute to the long-term viability of special status plants, which include federally listed species (Endangered, Threatened, and Proposed), BLM Sensitive species, and BLM Watch species.
- Special status plants would continue to exist at their present locations.
- The distribution, abundance, and vigor of special status plants would be maintained or improved.

The BLM is mandated by law to assist in the conservation and recovery of species listed as Threatened, Endangered, or those species Proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Candidate and BLM sensitive species and their habitats shall be conserved; furthermore, under authority of the ESA and BLM policy (6840), actions authorized, funded, or carried out by the BLM shall not contribute to the need for these species to be listed.

**Management Common to All Alternatives:**

- Federal actions that may affect federally listed species require consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Surveys would be conducted prior to BLM authorized actions to determine the presence or absence of BLM Sensitive plants.
- Management plans for the ACECs would tier to the objectives under each alternative.

**Alternative A:** "Occupied habitats of BLM Sensitive Type 2-4 plants would be maintained at a level sufficient to prevent federal listing."

**General Management Guidelines:** Occupied habitat refers to the physical location where plants are found. In other words, the objective of this alternative is to maintain the areas where BLM Sensitive plants are currently found at a level sufficient to prevent these plants from becoming endangered and requiring federal listing. This would be accomplished primarily through surveys for site-specific projects and implementing mitigation on a case-by-case basis. Reactive management would continue.

Type 2-4 plants are BLM Sensitive plants with differing levels of endangerment. Type 2 plants are at a greater risk of becoming extinct than Type 3 plants and Type 3 plants are at greater risk than Type 4. BLM Watch plants (Type 5) would not receive consideration under this alternative.

Current management of the Mud Flat Oolite Exclosure would continue. The area (1,468 acres) is closed to OHV use and livestock. Other restrictions are also in place.

**Alternative B:** "Occupied habitats of Type 2 plants would be maintained or improved where necessary to prevent listing. Occupied habitats of Types 3-4 would be maintained at a level sufficient to prevent listing."

**General Management Guidelines:** Management would focus on habitats of the rarest plants (Type 2) for maintenance or improvement. Otherwise, the intent of this alternative is similar to Alternative A, except that this alternative provides a means to accomplish the objectives for some species through specific management actions.

Designation of three ACECs (Mud Flat Oolite, Sugar Valley Badlands, and Horse Hill—12,878 acres total— would be primarily for the management of special status plants. The Bruneau River ACEC

designation would also benefit several special status plants, particularly in the lower elevation portion of the area.

The two Type 2 plants currently known from the planning area are Mulford's milkvetch and Packard's buckwheat. All known occupied habitat would receive some degree of protection under this alternative, either through ACEC designation or through actions designed for specific populations.

Management actions specifically for Davis peppergrass (Type 3) would be included also.

Impacts to Types 2-4 plants from ground-disturbing activities may or may not be eliminated or mitigated as long as the action would not contribute to the need to list the species.

Overall, management under this alternative would continue to be reactive for Type 3 and 4 plants. Proactive measures include those outlined under the proposed ACECs and actions for Davis peppergrass, Mulford's milkvetch, and Packard's buckwheat.

**Alternative C:** "Suitable and occupied habitats of Type 2-4 plants would be improved with emphasis on protection, rehabilitation, and enhancement across large habitat areas."

**General Management Guidelines**: This alternative adds protection for "suitable habitat" or areas of habitat that are capable of supporting special status plants, not just where the plants are actually found. It is also designed to focus management attention on all BLM Sensitive plants, instead of limiting attention to Type 2 plants as under Alternative B. Areas where Types 2-4 plants are found would be maintained or improved.

There would be management emphasis on protecting, rehabilitating, and enhancing large areas of suitable habitat through ACEC designation and implementation of regular monitoring, baseline surveys, and the elimination or mitigation of impacts from ground-disturbing activities. Type 5 plants would also receive some protection under this alternative.

In addition to the ACECs designated under Alternative B, two other ACECs would be designated for special status plants: Castle Creek (8,332 acres) and Mulford's milkvetch (2,220 acres). This is a total of 23,430 acres for special status plants. The larger area designated as Jacks Creek ACEC would encompass several special status plant populations in the lower elevation portion of the area.

Overall, management of special status plants and actions that affect these species would be highly proactive under this alternative.

**Alternative D**: "Suitable and occupied habitats of Type 2-4 plants would be maintained or improved with emphasis on minimizing or eliminating impacts to core habitat areas."

**General Management Guidelines**: For the purposes of this document, core habitat is defined as areas with a high density of populations of one or more plant species or areas that have populations in good condition. In general, this alternative is similar to Alternative B, though specific management actions would be applied to smaller areas.

ACEC designations would be almost the same as under Alternative B, but some management actions would be different. The Mulford's milkvetch habitat area designated as an ACEC under Alternative C would be managed as a group of exclosures, rather than as an ACEC.

Implementation of regular monitoring for Type 2 and 3 plants and conducting baseline surveys are proactive measures that would facilitate meeting the objective of this alternative.

### 2.6.7 Soil

**Common to All Alternatives:**

**Goals:**

- Watersheds would have stable vegetative communities that provide for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability.
- Soil productivity would be maintained and enhanced. Accelerated soil erosion caused by human activities would be minimal.

**Rationale:** The BLM is required to comply with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Clean Water Act, Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, and other related federal and state laws and regulations regarding watershed health, soil stability, and water quality. Improving and maintaining healthy properly functioning watersheds would benefit grazing, wildlife, fishery, water quality, and recreation programs.

**Management Common to All Alternatives**: Grazing allotments would be required to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health or be making significant progress toward meeting the standards where appropriate.

**Alternative A:**

**Objective**:

- To provide for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability improve watershed health on 1,020,738 acres (58 percent of the area).
    - Grandview/Bruneau Uplands 131,579 aces (35 percent);
    - Upper Castle Creek 112,110 acres (65 percent);
    - Riddle 659,649 acres (75 percent);
    - Grasmere 117,400 acres (55 percent).
- Prevent the potential for future localized soil erosion processes on all soils with a moderate to very high soil erosion potential. (See Map Soil-1)

**General Management Guidelines:** General BPA improvements would be implemented and realized over a longer time frame (life of the plan) with most watershed improvement being of a slight nature and more dependent on management controls (i.e., implementation of grazing systems) with less active restoration or rehabilitation planned.

Watersheds and soils would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and function. In the Riddle and Grasmere areas general watershed health would be improved in portions, maintained through most of the area, and decline in certain areas. In the Upper Castle Creek and Grandview/Bruneau Upland areas general watershed health would be improved in some portions, be generally maintained in others, and there would be areas that decline also (much of the lower elevation sites).

Where improvement occurs it would be related primarily to improvement in livestock management. Decline in watershed health would be primarily related to specie compositional changes (transition to less desirable species due mainly to wild fire), increased OHV use, and climatic factors that are out of our control.

Grazing of livestock on public lands would continue in a manner that maintains or improves watershed health depending on the existing conditions of the allotment. Grazing management actions, consistent

with current regulations and policies, would be implemented to maintain or make significant progress toward the Standards for Rangeland Health. Where these standards are not being met and current livestock management is found to be a significant factor changes in management would be implemented through allotment specific grazing decisions in order to make significant progress toward meeting the standard.

Livestock grazing practices would provide periodic rest and/or deferment during critical growth stages to meet the phenological needs of key plant species. Livestock grazing and other land management actions would provide for adequate amounts of vegetative ground cover and litter (determined on an ecological site basis) to support infiltration, soil stability, and maintain site productivity.

Undue erosion from surface disturbing activities would be prevented or minimized by applying appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) and/or Standard Operating Practices (SOPs). Mechanical impacts to the soil surface would be minimized through proper timing and duration for the type of use with regard to soil type and soil moisture content.

**Alternative B:** Objective: Same as Alt. A.

**General Management Guidelines:** General Planning Unit improvements would be implemented over a longer time frame (life of the plan) with most watershed improvements being of a slight nature and more dependent on management controls (i.e., implementation of grazing systems) with less active restoration or rehabilitation planned.

Watersheds and soils would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and function. In the Riddle and Grasmere areas, general watershed health would be improved in portions, maintained through most of the area, and decline in certain areas. In the Upper Castle Creek and Grandview/Bruneau Upland areas general watershed health would be improved in some portions, be generally maintained in others, and there would be areas that decline also (much of the lower elevation sites).

Where improvement occurs it would be related primarily to improvement in livestock management. Decline in watershed health would be primarily related to species compositional changes (transition to less desirable species due mainly to wild fire), increased OHV use, and climatic factors.

Grazing of livestock on public lands would continue in a manner that maintains or improves watershed health depending on the existing conditions of the allotment. Grazing management actions, consistent with current regulations and policies, would be implemented to maintain or make significant progress toward the Standards for Rangeland Health. Where these standards are not being met and current livestock management is found to be a significant factor changes in management would be implemented through allotment specific grazing decisions in order to make significant progress toward meeting the standard. Livestock grazing practices would provide periodic rest and/or deferment during critical growth stages to meet the phenological needs of key plant species. Livestock grazing and other land management actions would provide for adequate amounts of vegetative ground cover and litter (determined on an ecological site basis) to support infiltration, soil stability, and maintain site productivity.

Undue erosion from surface disturbing activities would be prevented or minimized by applying appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) and/or Standard Operating Practices (SOPs) in conjunction with site specific monitoring. Mechanical impacts to the soil surface and biological soil crusts would be minimized through proper timing and duration for the type of use with regard to soil type, soil moisture content, and biological soil crust vulnerability.

A maintenance and monitoring program would be implemented and maintained on trails and roads that are high priority or high profile. The trail systems designated and developed for motorcycle and ATV use having a high erosion potential rating would be an example of a high priority system. Trail maintenance could include grading, cleaning out and maintaining erosion control devices (waterbars), surfacing, and other actions that maintain the integrity of the trails and prevent undue erosion.

**Alternative C:**

**Objective**:

- To provide for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability improve watershed health on 1,202,344 acres (68 percent of the area) in 15 years.
    - Grandview/Bruneau Uplands 150,376 aces (40 percent);
    - Upper Castle Creek 125,908 acres (73 percent);
    - Riddle 730,011 acres (83 percent); Grasmere 196,049 acres (60 percent).
- Stabilize the current and prevent the potential for future localized soil erosion processes on all soils with a moderate to very high soil erosion potential. (See Map Soil-1)

**General Management Guidelines:** General Planning Unit improvements would be accelerated more under this alternative in terms of both timeframes and degree of input. Improvement under this alternative would be more of a moderate nature and dependent on both management controls and active vegetative treatments. Watersheds and soils would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and function.

In the Riddle and Grasmere areas, general watershed health would be improved over most of the area and maintained in the remaining portions with minimal declines. In the Upper Castle Creek and Grandview/Bruneau Upland areas, general watershed health would be improved in some areas, maintained in others, and expected to decline in portions (primarily the lower elevation areas). Improvement would results from improved management of livestock (this includes on uplands and riparian areas); vegetative restoration and rehabilitation (seeding of desirable grass, forb, and shrubs); vegetative control measures (use of fire, herbicide, and other tools for control of undesirable species); and better OHV management.

Decline in watershed health would be primarily related to species compositional changes (transition to less desirable species due mainly to wild fire) and climatic factors.

Grazing of livestock on public lands would continue in a manner that maintains or improves watershed health depending on the existing conditions of the allotment. Grazing management actions, consistent with current regulations and policies, would be implemented to maintain or make significant progress toward the Standards for Rangeland Health. Where these standards are not being met and current livestock management is found to be a significant factor changes in management would be implemented through allotment specific grazing decisions in order to make significant progress toward meeting the standard. Livestock grazing practices would provide periodic rest and/or deferment during critical growth stages to meet the phenological needs of key plant species. Livestock grazing and other land management actions would provide for adequate amounts of vegetative ground cover and litter (determined on an ecological site basis) to support infiltration, soil stability, and maintain site productivity.

Undue erosion from surface disturbing activities would be prevented or minimized by applying appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) and/or Standard Operating Practices (SOPs) in conjunction with site specific monitoring. Mechanical impacts to the soil surface and biological soil crusts would be minimized through proper timing and duration for the type of use with regard to soil type, soil moisture content, and biological soil crust vulnerability.

Areas of current active erosional processes would be documented, prioritized, and procedures implemented for stabilization of these processes. These procedures may range from changes in management (i.e., grazing, recreation) and allowing for natural stabilization or more action orientated procedures such as seeding, physical structures, and mechanical alterations.

The special designation of a Biological Soil Crust ACEC would protect over 1,700 acres of prime habitat for the benefit and future study of theses species.

**Alternative D:**

**Objective**:

- To provide for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability improve watershed health on 1,202,344 acres (68 percent of the area) in 20 years.
    - Grandview/Bruneau Uplands 150,376 aces (40 percent);
    - Upper Castle Creek 125,908 acres (73 percent);
    - Riddle 730,011 acres (83 percent); Grasmere 196,049 acres (60 percent).
- Stabilize the current and prevent the potential for future localized soil erosion processes on all soils with a moderate to very high soil erosion potential. (See Map Soil-1)

**General Management Guidelines:** General Planning Unit improvements would be implemented and realized over a longer time frame than under Alternative C with a slightly lower degree of outcome. Watersheds and soils would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and function.

In the Riddle and Grasmere areas general watershed health would be improved over most of the area and maintain in the remaining portions with minimal declines. In the Upper Castle Creek and Grandview/Bruneau Upland areas general watershed health would be improved in some areas, maintained in others, and expected to decline in portions (primarily the lower elevation areas).

Improvement would results from improved management of livestock (this includes on uplands and riparian areas); vegetative restoration and rehabilitation (seeding of desirable grass, forb, and shrubs); and vegetative control measures (use of fire, herbicide, and other tools for control of undesirable species); and better OHV management.

Decline in watershed health would be primarily related to species compositional changes (transition to less desirable species due mainly to wild fire) and climatic factors that are out of our control.

Grazing of livestock on public lands would continue in a manner that maintains or improves watershed health depending on the existing conditions of the allotment. Grazing management actions, consistent with current regulations and policies, would be implemented to maintain or make significant progress toward the Standards for Rangeland Health. Where these standards are not being met and current livestock management is found to be a significant factor changes in management would be implemented through allotment specific grazing decisions in order to make significant progress toward meeting the standard. Livestock grazing practices would provide periodic rest and/or deferment during critical growth stages to meet the phenological needs of key plant species. Livestock grazing and other land management actions would provide for adequate amounts of vegetative ground cover and litter (determined on an ecological site basis) to support infiltration, soil stability, and maintain site productivity.

Undue erosion from surface disturbing activities would be prevented or minimized by applying appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) and/or Standard Operating Practices (SOPs) in conjunction with site specific monitoring. Mechanical impacts to the soil surface and biological soil crusts would be minimized through proper timing and duration for the type of use with regard to soil type, soil moisture content, and biological soil crust vulnerability.

Areas of current active erosional processes would be documented, prioritized, and procedures implemented for stabilization of these processes. These procedures may range from changes in management (i.e., grazing, recreation) and allowing for natural stabilization or more action orientated procedures such as seeding, physical structures, and mechanical alterations.

The special designation of a Biological Soil Crust ACEC would protect over 1,700 acres of prime habitat for the benefit and future study of theses species.

### 2.6.8 Vegetation

Objectives for upland vegetation management in the planning area fall into three broad categories: maintenance, improvement, and restoration of vegetation communities. Current condition and site potential are the primary factors determining the ability and time it would take for an area to achieve the desired future condition. Changes in management practices, such as grazing, fire management, and recreation, are the primary management tools that can be used to affect change in vegetation. Factors beyond our control, such as climate and natural fire, would also influence the ability to reach the desired future condition.

Differences between the alternatives occur primarily in areas where there is an opportunity for improvement (altered understories, juniper encroachment) and would be measured in the amount of time required to achieve the desired future condition. Areas that have crossed a threshold (i.e., cheatgrass has replaced native perennial grasses, some species of perennial grasses are no longer present) have limited opportunity for improvement. Because extensive alterations would be required to reestablish native species in these areas, the primary focus is to limit further degradationNatural processes such as fire, drought, and insect or weed infestations could impact our ability to even maintain lower elevation communities. Upper elevation communities are generally in better condition and are more resilient to those processes.

Areas that would be maintained are currently either in acceptable condition or have crossed a threshold and have limited potential to improve based on currently available management practices and actions. Intact communities are examples of areas that are in generally acceptable condition; the overstory shrub or tree components are present (or, in upper elevations, can naturally recover) and the expected complement of grasses and forbs are present. The vigor and distribution of perennial plants would be maintained during the life of the plan. Shrub communities where cheatgrass dominates the understory are examples of areas that have crossed a threshold; native bunchgrasses are not present and there is no currently available method of re-establishing them. The shrub overstory and adequate cover for watershed protection would be maintained during the life of the plan.

Improvement could be expected in areas where the understory has been altered from expected conditions, but they have not crossed a threshold; or in areas where the understory is intact, but community composition (species density, vigor, and productivity) is somewhat different than expected. The degree of improvement may range from increased vigor of the existing perennial grasses to re-establishment of the expected component of grasses, forbs, and biological soil crusts. The degree and speed of improvement would depend on the degree of alteration, elevation, and type of management applied. Improvement in lower elevation areas would be slower and have limited potential for improvement in condition when compared to upper elevation areas.

Restoration would occur in areas that have been altered by past fires or where juniper is expanding into shrub communities. Efforts would focus on restoring or removing plant species so that vegetative communities more closely approximate expected conditions for a site. In fire altered communities, the remaining grass component would influence the amount of restoration required and the degree of energy

input. Cheatgrass dominated areas would have the lowest potential for successful restoration and would require the greatest amount of energy input to restore them. Restoration of native perennial and crested wheatgrass dominated sites could be accomplished by re-establishing shrub cover and, in sage grouse habitat, potentially forbs. Juniper would be reduced in areas where they are expanding in shrub communities.

Objectives for shrub communities with cheatgrass understories, upper elevation shrub communities with intact or altered understories, and juniper woodlands are similar between the alternatives (Table Veg 1). However, the timeframe and degree of improvement for upper elevation shrub communities with intact or altered understories would vary between alternatives.

**Rationale:** The BLM is required to comply with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Clean Water Act, Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, and other related federal and state laws and regulations regarding watershed health, soil stability, and water quality. Improving and maintaining healthy properly functioning watersheds would benefit grazing, wildlife, fishery, water quality, and recreation programs.

**Management Common to All Alternatives**: Grazing allotments would be required to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health or be making significant progress toward meeting the standards where appropriate.

**Table Veg 1** Objective comparison between alternatives for shrub and grass dominated upland communities. M – maintain existing conditions, I – improve existing conditions, R – restore vegetation components.

| Elev | Overstory | Understory | Alternative | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | A | B | C | D |
| Low (<5,000 ft) | Shrub | Intact | M | M | M (G)[a]<br>I (P,F)[b] | M (F,G)<br>I (P) |
| | | Altered | I | I (F,G)<br>M (P) | I | I |
| | | Cheatgrass | M | M | M | M |
| All | No shrubs | Intact | M | M | R | R (R1,R2)<br>M (other) |
| | | Crested wheatgrass | M | M | R | R (50% of R1)<br>M (other) |
| | | Cheatgrass | M | M | R (R1)<br>M (other) | R (50% of R1)<br>M (other) |
| Upper (>5,000 ft) | Shrub | Intact | M | M | M | M |
| | | Altered | I | I | I | I |
| | Shrub w/ Juniper | | R (10%) | R (40%) | R (40%) | R (30%) |
| | Juniper | | M | M | M | M |

[a] G – good condition
[b] F – fair condition, P – poor condition

**Alternative A:** Continue Present Management – In accordance with the Bruneau MFP, agency policy and regulatory/statutory guidance.

This alternative would emphasize maintenance of communities with intact understories, communities with altered understories that have crossed a threshold, or communities where shrubs are not present; and improvement of communities with altered understories that have not crossed a threshold (Table Veg 1). Improvement would occur over the long-term. In both lower and upper elevation altered communities, improvement would be primarily in the form of increased vigor of existing plants, with limited recruitment of new plants. Restoration of shrub communities encroached by juniper would occur at a slow rate (approximately 10% of the total juniper encroachment area would be treated over the life of the plan). Over the life of the plan, most areas would meet or be making progress toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards, but would not necessarily be at site potential.

**Shrubs Present, Lower Elevation** (412,000 acres)
- Maintain areas with intact (4%) and cheatgrass (39%) understories
- Improve areas with altered understories (57%)

**Grass Dominated** (160,400 acres)
- Maintain intact perennial, crested wheatgrass, and cheatgrass dominated areas (100%)

**Shrubs Present, Upper Elevation** (794,400 acres)
- Maintain areas with intact understories (43%)
- Improve areas with altered understories (56%)
- Maintain old growth juniper and treat 10% of juniper encroachment

**Management Actions:** With the exception of protection of old-growth juniper from harvesting, there are no management actions specifically related to vegetation under this alternative. Maintenance of and improvements in upland vegetation condition would depend on management actions related to other activities such as livestock grazing, fire and fuels, and recreation. With livestock management, changes in timing and intensity of use would be emphasized. Redesignation of the existing ACECs would help protect and enhance intact upland communities.

**Alternative B:** Implement a modest level of management to maintain good resource conditions and improve resources where appropriate with emphasis on increased resource use.

This alternative would have a greater emphasis on maintenance of communities than alternative A (Table Veg 1). Conditions would be maintained in communities with intact understories, communities with altered understories that are in poor condition or have crossed a threshold, and communities where shrubs are not present. Improvement in lower elevation areas would only be expected in shrub communities with altered understories that were in fair or good condition. Improvement in upper elevation areas would be expected in communities with altered understories. Improvement would occur over the long-term and would be at a lower level than Alternative A. In both lower and upper elevation altered communities, improvement would be primarily in the form of improved vigor of existing plants, with limited recruitment of new plants. Restoration of shrub communities encroached by juniper would occur at a rapid rate (approximately 40% of the total juniper encroachment area would be treated over the life of the plan). Over the life of the plan, most areas would meet or be making progress toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards, but areas with perennial grass understories would not be at site potential.

**Shrubs Present, Lower Elevation** (410,000 acres)
- Maintain areas with intact or altered (55%) and cheatgrass (39%) understories
- Improve areas with altered understories in fair or good condition (6%)

**Grass Dominated** (160,400 acres)

- Maintain intact perennial, crested wheatgrass, and cheatgrass dominated areas (100%)

**Shrubs Present, Upper Elevation** (795,300 acres)

- Maintain areas with intact understories (43%)
- Improve areas with altered understories (56%)
- Maintain old growth juniper and treat 40% of juniper encroachment

**Management Actions:** Similar to alternative A, with the exception of protection of old-growth juniper from harvesting, there are no management actions specifically related to vegetation under this alternative. Maintenance of and improvements in upland vegetation condition would depend on management actions related to other activities such as livestock grazing, fire and fuels, and recreation. With livestock management, changes in livestock distribution would be emphasized. Old-growth juniper would be protected from harvest and areas where juniper is expanding into shrub communities would be aggressively treated. Designation of five new ACECs, expansion of the Mud Flat Oolite ACEC, and redesignation of the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would help protect and enhance intact upland communities.

**Alternative C:** Implement a high level of management to maintain and improve resource conditions where appropriate while allowing compatible resource use.

This alternative would emphasize restoration of communities where shrubs have been lost, maintenance of communities with intact understories and improvement of communities with altered understories. Areas where maintenance and improvement would be expected to occur are similar to alternative A, with an additional emphasis to improve mountain shrub communities with altered understories (Table Veg 1). Improvement would occur over the long-term in lower elevation communities and the mid-term in the upper elevations. In lower-elevation altered communities, improvement would be characterized by improved vigor of existing plants, with some recruitment of new plants. In upper-elevation altered communities, improvement would be characterized by improved vigor of existing plants, recruitment of new plants, and improvement from poor and fair condition to good condition. Restoration of shrub communities encroached by juniper would occur at a rapid rate (approximately 40% of the total juniper encroachment area would be treated over the life of the plan). Over the life of the plan, most areas would meet or be making progress toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards, but areas with perennial grass understories would not be at site potential.

**Shrubs Present, Lower Elevation** (410,660 acres)

- Maintain areas with intact (2%) and cheatgrass (39%) understories
- Improve areas with altered understories (59%)

**Grass Dominated** (Intact = 87,700 acres, Crested Wheatgrass = 33,400 acres, Cheatgrass = 39,300 acres)

- Restore shrubs and forbs in lower elevation intact communities (19%) and allow natural recovery in upper elevation intact communities (81%)
- Restore shrubs and forbs in crested wheatgrass communities in key sage grouse habitat areas (41%) and maintain crested wheatgrass areas elsewhere (59%)
- Restore shrub, perennial grasses, and forbs to cheatgrass dominated communities in key sage grouse habitat areas (35%) and maintain watershed cover elsewhere (65%)

**Shrubs Present, Upper Elevation** (799,700 acres)

- Maintain areas with intact understories (42%)
- Improve areas with altered understories (57%)
- Maintain old growth juniper and treat 40% of juniper encroachment

**Management Actions:** Management actions emphasize active restoration of native plant communities. Priority would be given to areas and techniques that would have the greatest opportunity for success and that expand and connect existing sage grouse habitats. In areas where maintenance and improvements are expected, management actions related to other activities such as livestock grazing, fire and fuels, and recreation would be emphasized. With livestock management, changes in timing, intensity, and duration of use would be emphasized. Old-growth juniper would be protected from harvest and areas where juniper is expanding into shrub communities would be aggressively treated. Designation of nine new ACECs, expansion of the Mud Flat Oolite ACEC, and redesignation of the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would help protect and enhance intact upland communities.

**Alternative D:** Implement management that balances public resource use opportunities while maintaining and improving resource conditions.

This alternative would emphasize restoration of communities where shrubs have been lost, maintenance of communities with intact understories and improvement of communities with altered understories. Restoration would be occur in key sage grouse habitat and adjacent areas with an emphasis on maintaining existing habitat by reducing fire potential in adjacent areas Areas where maintenance and improvement would be expected to occur are similar to alternative A, with an additional emphasis to improve mountain shrub communities with altered understories (Table Veg 1). Improvement would occur over the long-term in lower elevation communities and the mid-term in the upper elevations. In lower-elevation altered communities, improvement would be characterized by improved vigor of existing plants, with some recruitment of new plants. In upper-elevation altered communities, improvement would be characterized by improved vigor of existing plants, recruitment of new plants, and improvement from poor and fair condition to good condition. Restoration of shrub communities encroached by juniper would occur at a moderately-rapid rate (approximately 30% of the total juniper encroachment area would be treated over the life of the plan). Over the life of the plan, most areas would meet or be making progress toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards, but areas with perennial grass understories would not be at site potential.

**Shrubs Present, Lower Elevation** (412,000 acres)

- Maintain areas with intact (3%) and cheatgrass (39%) understories
- Improve areas with altered understories (58%)

**Grass Dominated** (Intact = 87,700 acres, Crested Wheatgrass = 33,400 acres, Cheatgrass = 39,300 acres)

- Restore shrubs and forbs in lower elevation intact communities to connect or expand existing sage grouse habitat (9%) and allow natural recovery in remaining areas (91%)
- Restore shrubs and forbs in crested wheatgrass communities in key sage grouse habitat (21%) and maintain crested wheatgrass areas elsewhere (79%)
- Restore shrub, perennial grasses, and forbs to cheatgrass dominated to connect or expand existing sage grouse habitat (19%) and maintain watershed cover elsewhere (81%)

**Shrubs Present, Upper Elevation** (799,700 acres)

- Maintain areas with intact understories (43%)
- Improve areas with altered understories (56%)
- Maintain old growth juniper (1%) and treat 30% of juniper encroachment

**Management Actions:** Management actions would include both active restoration of native plant communities and actions that would facilitate maintenance and improvement of conditions. Priority for restoration would be given to areas and techniques that would have the greatest opportunity for success and that are in or adjacent to key sage grouse habitat. In areas where maintenance and improvements are expected, management actions related to other activities such as livestock grazing, fire and fuels, and

recreation would be emphasized. With livestock management, changes in timing, intensity, and duration of use would be emphasized. Old-growth juniper would be protected from harvest and areas where juniper is expanding into shrub communities would be aggressively treated. Designation of six new ACECs, expansion of the Mud Flat Oolite ACEC, and redesignation of the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would help protect and enhance intact upland communities.

### 2.6.8.1 Vegetation – Riparian and Wetlands

The BLM is required to comply with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Clean Water Act, Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, and other related state and federal regulations and policies regarding water quality and management of riparian and wetland habitats. FLPMA places management of fish and wildlife habitats on equal footing with other traditional land uses; requires that a portion of grazing fees be invested in improvement of resource conditions, including enhancement, protection, and maintenance of wetland and riparian habitats. BLM National Policy calls for the restoration and maintenance of riparian-wetland areas so that 75% or more are in proper functioning condition by 1997. The Clean Water Act and State of Idaho water quality standards prescribe that BLM implement best management practices to support beneficial uses such as cold water aquatic life. Executive orders for floodplain management and protection of wetlands provide further direction for protection and management of riparian areas and wetlands.

**Alternative A: Current Management**

**Objectives:**

- Maintain 25% (90 of 360) wetland and riparian areas associated with springs or reservoirs in PFC, and improve 25% of wetlands to PFC or functional at risk (FAR) with an upward trend within 20 years.
- Continue to manage 5 wetlands to improve plant species and diversity to that of the potential natural plant community (PNC, Riparian Map 2).
- Maintain 133 miles of riparian habitat on streams at or above proper functioning condition (Riparian Map-1) and improve 92 miles to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 15 years.

Under this alternative, riparian and wetland habitats would be improved mainly through the adjustment of grazing management practices. In general, areas with riparian habitat would primarily be grazed during the spring, or under rotational grazing systems that limits hot season grazing to a frequency of no more than one year out of four. Grazing practices would be adjusted for individual allotments as part of Rangeland Health Assessments and implementation of Idaho Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Standards and Guides).

Approximately 90 spring wetlands (25% of those in the planning area) would be improved from FAR to PFC within 20 years by fencing areas to create riparian pastures that facilitate light grazing use of wetlands. However, riparian habitats on streams would primarily be improved through the implementation of new grazing systems that conform to Idaho Standards and Guides. Rate of habitat improvement would be slow (meet objectives in 15–20 years) because about 5 years would be required just to complete Rangeland Health Assessments and issue new grazing permits that comply with Standards and Guides, and because riparian areas would not be rested from livestock grazing to speed improvement of habitats.

**Alternative B:**

**Objectives:**

- Maintain 25% (90 of 360) wetland and riparian areas associated with springs or reservoirs in PFC, and improve 30% of wetlands to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 20 years.

- Improve plant species diversity and structure to that of PNC on 20 wetlands (at 19 springs and 1 reservoir) over the next 15 years (Riparian Map 2).
- Maintain 133 miles of riparian habitat on streams at or above proper functioning condition (Riparian Map-1) and improve 92 miles to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 20 years
-

Similar to Alternative A, riparian and wetland habitats would be improved mainly through the adjustment of grazing management practices. Grazing practices would be evaluated for individual allotments as part of Rangeland Health Assessments and riparian areas on streams would be improved through the implementation grazing systems that conform to Idaho Standards and Guides. Approximately 110 spring wetlands (30% of those in the planning area) would be improved from FAR to PFC by either fencing areas to create riparian pastures that facilitate light grazing use of wetlands, or through the use of techniques to discourage livestock use of wetland areas such as livestock herding and juniper revetments to block livestock access to wetlands.

Rate of habitat improvement would be slow (meet objectives in 20 years) because about 5 years would be required just to complete Rangeland Health Assessments and issue new grazing permits that comply with Standards and Guides, and because few riparian areas would not be rested from livestock grazing to speed improvement of habitats. Only a few stream riparian areas prioritized for improvement would be temporarily fenced to rest them from livestock grazing. Wetlands identified to be managed for PNC (Riparian Map 2) would be fenced to exclude livestock use.

**Alternative C:**

**Objectives:**

- Maintain 25% (90 of 360) wetland and riparian areas associated with springs or reservoirs in PFC, and improve 60% of wetlands to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 15 years.
- Improve plant species diversity and structure to that of PNC on 50 wetlands (at springs and a few reservoirs) over the next 15 years (Riparian Map 2).
- Maintain 133 miles of riparian habitat on streams at or above proper functioning condition (Riparian Map-1) and improve 92 miles to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 10 years, and restore 5 miles of non-functioning streams to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 15 years

Similar to Alternative A and B, riparian and wetland habitats would be improved mainly through the adjustment of grazing management practices. Grazing practices would be evaluated for individual allotments as part of Rangeland Health Assessments and riparian areas on streams would be improved through the implementation grazing systems that conform to Idaho Standards and Guides. However, habitats would improve at a faster rate (meet objectives in 10–15 years) by temporarily resting the majority (≥60%) of riparian areas that are FAR and being impacted by livestock use until they have a strong upward trend in condition. Riparian areas would be rested primarily through, but not limited to, the use of temporary pasture closings. All non-functioning stream riparian areas would be rested from livestock grazing until they are FAR with an upward trend. Temporary fencing would primarily be used to rest these areas. Once objectives are met, grazing could resume with the implementation of grazing practices that maintain conditions.

Approximately 215 spring wetlands (about 60% of those in the planning area) would be improved from FAR to PFC primarily through the implementation of grazing systems that adjust season of use, length of use (number of days), frequency of use (number of years grazed and rested), and number of livestock grazing an area so that wetland functions are not impacted. These grazing systems would rely on little no new fencing to control livestock use. Areas with greatest conflicts between continuing livestock use levels and improving wetland conditions would be fenced to create riparian pastures facilitating light grazing of wetlands by livestock.

Wetlands identified to be managed for PNC (Riparian Map 2) would be fenced to exclude livestock use. This alternative would evaluate the restoration of springs to PFC where a development has dewatered the wetland or it has been replaced by a reservoir or stock pond.

Additional restoration actions include restoring cottonwood tree communities where appropriate through riparian plantings, and using stream and floodplain engineering techniques to restore nonfunctioning stream segments and reestablish perennial stream flows.

Under this alternative, the number of OHV trail crossings across streams supporting riparian habitat would be minimized, and BMPs would be used to minimize impacts of OHV trail crossings to stream channels and riparian areas.

**Alternative D:**
**Objectives:**

- Maintain 25% (90 of 360) wetland and riparian areas associated with springs or reservoirs in PFC, and improve 45% of wetlands to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 20 years.
- Improve plant species diversity and structure to that of PNC on 25 wetlands (at springs and a few reservoirs) over the next 15 years (Riparian Map 2).
- Maintain 133 miles of riparian habitat on streams at or above proper functioning condition (Riparian Map-1) and improve 92 miles to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 15 years, and restore 5 miles of non-functioning streams to PFC or FAR with an upward trend within 20 years

Similar to Alternative A and B, riparian and wetland habitats would be improved mainly through the adjustment of grazing management practices. Grazing practices would be evaluated for individual allotments as part of Rangeland Health Assessments and riparian areas on streams would be improved through the implementation grazing systems that conform to Idaho Standards and Guides.

Habitats would improve faster than under Alternative B (meet objectives in 15–20 years) but not as fast as Alternative C. This Alternative would emphasize the use of grazing systems that adjust season of use, length of use (number of days), frequency of use (number of years grazed and rested), and number of livestock grazing an area to improve the functioning condition of stream riparian areas. Temporary rest would be used to improve high priority riparian areas that are FAR and being impacted by livestock use by temporary closing pastures or temporarily fencing them to exclude grazing. Once objectives are met, grazing could resume with the implementation of grazing practices that maintain conditions.

Approximately 160 spring wetlands (about 45% of those in the planning area) would be improved from FAR to PFC through a variety of management practices including but not limited to fencing, herding, creation of riparian pastures, and implementation of grazing systems that improve wetland functions. Additionally, some wetlands would be temporarily rested from grazing through the use of juniper revetments to prevent or limit livestock access. Wetlands identified to be managed for PNC (Riparian Map 2) would be fenced to exclude livestock use.

Cottonwood tree communities would be restored where appropriate through riparian plantings. Under this alternative, the number of OHV trail crossings across streams supporting riparian habitat would be minimized, and BMPs would be used to minimize impacts of OHV trail crossings to stream channels and riparian areas.

### 2.6.9 Visual Resources

**Common to All Alternatives:**

- Section 102(8) of FLPMA declares that public land would be managed to protect the quality of scenic values and, where appropriate, to preserve and protect certain public land in its natural condition.
- NEPA, section 101(b), requires Federal agencies, "assure for all Americans…aesthetically pleasing surroundings."
- Guidelines for the identification of VRM classes on public land are contained in "BLM Manual Handbook 8410-1, Visual Resource Inventory. The establishment of VRM classes on public land is based on an evaluation of the landscapes scenic qualities, public sensitivity towards certain areas (such as certain special management areas, travel corridors and landscape settings), and the location of affected land from primary travel corridors (distance zoning).

**Alternative A:** Management would continue as under current MFP decisions. All proposed decisions would be evaluated to ensure that they are in compliance with VRM classifications. A ½ mile corridor on each side of Highways 51 and 78 and a ½ mile corridor around public lands on C.J. Strike Reservoir and on either side of Mud Flat Road would be managed as a travel influence zone (equivalent to VRM Class II) where management activities would preserve or enhance scenic quality. Management of WSAs would continue under VRM Class I management objectives. Should WSAs not be designated as wilderness and released by Congress, the areas would be re-inventoried to determine their actual VRM Class.

**Alternative B:** All proposed activities would be evaluated to ensure that they were in compliance with VRM classifications.

- Public lands along the corridor of Highway 51 would be managed under VRM Class III objectives.
- Public lands along the corridor of Highway 78 and C.J. Strike Reservoir would be managed under Class III objectives, except in areas within ¼ mile of survving segments of the Oregon Trail. Those areas would be managed under VRM Class II objectives.
- The viewshed corridor along the Mud Flat Road (Owyhee Uplands Backcountry Byway) would be managed under VRM Class II objectives to protect the public's siteseeing and wildlife viewing activities on this popular travel route.

**Alternative C:** All proposed activities would be evaluated to ensure that they were in compliance with VRM classifications.

- Public lands along the corridor of Highway 51 would be managed under VRM Class III objectives.
- Public lands along the corridor of Highway 78 and C.J. Strike Reservoir would be managed under Class III objectives, except in areas within ¼ mile of survving segments of the Oregon Trail. Those areas would be managed under VRM Class II objectives.
- The viewshed corridor along the Mud Flat Road (Owyhee Uplands Backcountry Byway) would be managed under VRM Class II objectives to protect the public's siteseeing and wildlife viewing activities on this popular travel route.

If WSAs were released from consideration as wilderness, the lands would be re-inventoried for scenic quality and managed appropriately.

**Alternative D:** All proposed activities would be evaluated to ensure that they were in compliance with VRM classifications.

In this alternative, those areas within one mile of major canyon systems that would be managed to provide primitive recreation experiences would continue to be managed as VRM Class I, should the affected areas

not be designated as wilderness. All remaining WSA acreage in the Bruneau Planning Unit would be managed under VRM Class II objectives if the areas were not designated as wilderness.

- Public lands along the corridor of Highway 51 would be managed under VRM Class III objectives.
- Public lands along the corridor of Highway 78 and C.J. Strike Reservoir would be managed under Class III objectives, except in areas within ¼ mile of surviving segments of the Oregon Trail. Those areas would be managed under VRM Class II objectives.
- The viewshed corridor along the Mud Flat Road (Owyhee Uplands Backcountry Byway) would be managed under VRM Class II objectives to protect the public's siteseeing and wildlife viewing activities on this popular travel route.

### 2.6.10 Water Quality

The BLM's role in the management of water resources is to restore, maintain or enhance the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the nation's waters. BLM accomplishes this by complying with Planning Criteria.

**Assumptions:**

- BLM is obligated to meet water quality standards.
- Water quality standards may be numeric or narrative. In cases where a numeric standard is not being met, and where data and analyses indicate the standard is physically, chemically, or biologically attainable, BLM implements management practices that facilitate attainment of the standard. Water Quality Appendix 1 lists the applicable water quality standards.
- Due to natural physical, chemical, or biologic limitations, a numeric standard may not be attainable, even under the best environmental conditions. In these cases, BLM cooperates with IDEQ to determine appropriate standards and management actions needed to meet and maintain those standards.
- BLM cooperates with IDEQ during subbasin assessment-TMDL analysis and TMDL Implementation Plan development and implementation. TMDLs and implementation plans set the stage for making progress toward meeting water quality standards for CWA Section 303(d) impaired waters. The rate of water quality improvement would vary, depending on the unique circumstances of a water body. Water Quality Appendix 2 lists the current total maximum daily load allocations for specified waters.
- Water quality is a function of the range of resources (geology and soils; landform, drainage density and patterns; amount, timing and intensity of precipitation; upland and riparian vegetative composition and condition; noxious and invasive species; aquifer properties) and activities-events (wildlife, wild horse and livestock grazing; wild fire; prescribed fire; high runoff events; drought; OHV use; road and trail networks; mining; herbicide/pesticide application; hazardous materials transport) that occur throughout a watershed (uplands, riparian areas, and aquatic areas), all of which affect the way a watershed captures, stores, detains, and releases water. Water Quality Appendices 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the relationship of upland and riparian resources to water quality and beneficial uses.
- Improvement in water quality generally lags behind improvements in upland and riparian areas. Water Quality Appendix 6 (Rosgen Stream Types) provides an interpretation of how different stream types are expected to respond to and recover from disturbance. Water Quality 7 (Winward Stability Class) illustrates how natural bank stability can be used as a surrogate to indicate beneficial use support for sediment.
- Alternatives A, B, C, and D reflect the varying rates of improvement that would occur in upland and riparian areas, which would be reflected in subsequent water quality conditions.

**Management Actions:** Water quality is a function of natural processes and anthropogenic activities that occur within, above and beneath a watershed. Many of the management actions that affect vegetation and soils would directly or indirectly affect water quality. Water quality standards are maintained by

implementing proper grazing management practices, road and trail construction standards and maintenance, proper location of facilities (e.g. recreation sites, parking areas, corrals), proper use of prescribed fire, and use of appropriate wild fire management control and rehabilitation practices. Grazing allotments would be required to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health or be making significant progress toward meeting the standards where appropriate. Soil erosion caused by surface disturbing activities would be minimized through proper timing with regard to soil moisture content and avoidance of high erosion hazard soils. Streams that have naturally occurring high quality waters would be retained. Improving and maintaining healthy properly functioning watersheds and riparian areas would benefit water quality.

**Alternative A:** Watersheds would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and water quality. The current management model is generally reactionary, and, as such, management strategies are incorporated from crisis to crisis . The anticipated time frame for meeting the water quality goals would vary from short (1-5 years) to longer duration (up to 20 years or more) for a given water body, depending on the urgency of the management situation.

**Objective 7-Water Quality**: Maintain or improve water quality on 119 miles of stream that are meeting state of Idaho water quality standards and for which TMDLs have been developed or delayed (Map 4).

Maintain or improve water quality on 64 miles of perennial streams that are meeting state of Idaho water quality standards for cold water aquatic life beneficial uses:

**Water Resources Table 1.**

| Stream | Fully Supporting Cold Water Aquatic Life[1] |
|---|---|
| Marys Creek | 4.8 |
| Crab Creek | 2.5 |
| Big Jacks Creek | 10.8 |
| Duncan Creek | 4.5 |
| Zeno Canyon | 1.8 |
| Cottonwood Creek | 5.6 |
| Little Jacks Creek | 18.4 |
| OX Prong | 2.4 |
| Shoofly Creek (Snake River) | 1.9 |
| East Fork Shoofly Creek | 4.8 |
| Poison Creek | 3.6 |
| Shoofly Creek (Owyhee River) | 2.6 |
| **Total Miles** | **63.7** |

[1]Support status is based on existing data. All water quality parameters have not necessarily been sampled for each stream.

Improve water quality on 55 miles of 303(d) listed streams for which the state of Idaho has developed TMDLs or for which TMDLs have been delayed pending additional data collection:

**Water Resources Table 2.**

| Stream | Miles | TMDL | TMDL Delayed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bruneau River | 0.6 | NUT | TEMP |
| Jacks Creek | 0.9 | DO, NUT, SED, BACT | TEMP |
| South Fork Castle Creek | 4.1 | ----- | BACT |
| Deep Creek | 32.8 | SED, TEMP | ----- |
| Pole Creek | 16.1 | TEMP | ----- |
| Blue Creek Reservoir | (189 ac) | BACT | ----- |
| **Total Miles** | **54.5** | | |

NUT = nutrients; DO = Dissolved Oxygen; SED = Sediment; BACT = Bacteria
TEMP = Temperature

**A.** Improve water quality to where it complies with State of Idaho water quality regulations on 240 miles of stream (Water Quality Map 5).

1. Improve water quality on 228 miles of non-303(d) listed perennial waters which do not fully support the water temperature criteria for cold water aquatic life beneficial uses and 88 miles of non-303(d) listed waters which do not fully support the water temperature criteria for salmonid spawning beneficial uses:

**Water Resources Table 3.**

| Stream | Not Fully Supporting Cold Water Aquatic Life | Not Fully Supporting Salmonid Spawning |
|---|---|---|
| Snake River | 2.1 | N/A |
| Shoofly Creek (Snake River) | 0.2 | ND |
| Poison Creek | 1.5 | ND |
| Birch Creek | 7.1 | N/A |
| Castle Creek | 4.0 | ND |
| South Fork Castle Creek | 2.4 | ND |
| Bruneau River | 58.6 | 39.2 |
| Sheep Creek | 49.3 | 19.5 |
| Marys Creek | 0.0 | 4.8 |
| Crab Creek | 0.0 | 2.5 |
| Big Jacks Creek | 30.1 | 11.2 |
| Wickahoney Creek | 3.8 | 3.8 |
| Duncan Creek | 0.0 | 4.5 |
| Zeno Canyon | 0.0 | 2.5 |
| Little Jacks Creek | 2.6 | ND |
| Owyhee River | 10.1 | ND |
| Battle Creek | 40.3 | ND |
| Big Springs Creek | 6.1 | ND |
| Camel Creek | 2.7 | ND |
| Camas Creek | 5.1 | ND |
| Rock Creek | 2.4 | ND |
| **(Net Miles = 240) Total Miles** | **228.4** | **88** |

N/A= Not Applicable; ND = No Data

**Management Actions:** (See Management Actions Alternatives Table)
BLM (in cooperation with DEQ or other state agencies) would collect and analyze additional water quality data to fully characterize all perennial waters to determine beneficial use support status. BLM would implement BMPs designed to improve the health and vigor of riparian areas, revise or develop grazing management plans to improve riparian areas that are functional-at risk and plant riparian species to restore highly degraded areas that have the capability to respond to treatment.

Grazing management plans would be revised or new plans would be developed where evaluations show riparian areas are not properly functioning. Grazing management practices would provide sufficient residual vegetation to shade stream channels, provide cover, capture sediment, and stabilize stream banks and channels, such that streams are properly functioning.

The Bruneau River, Owyhee River and CJ Strike Reservoir are designated as special resource waters (IDAPA 58.01.02.140.01, 02, 04). Special resource waters are recognized as needing intensive protection to preserve outstanding or unique characteristics or to maintain current beneficial uses. Because the Bruneau and Owyhee Rivers do not fully support cold water aquatic life beneficial uses, BLM would intensively manage those reaches that have the capability to enhance effective shading provided by riparian shrubs and trees.

In addition, many of the management actions described for fisheries, riparian, and rangeland vegetation would promote overall watershed health with a resultant improvement in water quality.

**Alternative B:** Watersheds would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and water quality. Timeframes for attaining full support of beneficial uses and water quality standards would be dictated by management actions implemented for upland and riparian areas. Because this alternative relies on implementing management controls that would supplement natural recovery processes rather than implementing active restoration projects, ecological recovery would occur over a longer time period. The progression toward desired future conditions would occur along a steady continuum at a slow rate, as water quality conditions respond to upland and riparian management activities. The estimated time required for all waters to meet or be making significant progress toward meeting water quality requirements (including assessment of unassessed waters and implementation of TMDL management plans) would be 20 years or longer. Exceptions would occur in those areas where the management practice eliminates the dominant disturbance mechanism (in most cases, grazing or OHV impacts) via fencing or restricted use.

**Objective 7-Water Quality**: Same as Alternative A

**Management Actions:** See Management Actions Alternatives Table
Nominate the following streams for designation as special resource waters under IDAPA 58.01.02.056):

- Big Jacks Creek (unique ecological significance; outstanding recreational qualities; outstanding aesthetic qualities; intensive protection necessary to maintain existing, but jeopardized beneficial uses - salmonid spawning and cold water aquatic life)
- Sheep Creek (intensive protection necessary to maintain existing, but jeopardized beneficial uses - salmonid spawning and cold water aquatic life)
- Marys Creek (intensive protection necessary to maintain existing, but jeopardized beneficial uses - salmonid spawning and cold water aquatic life)
- Battle Creek (intensive protection necessary to maintain existing, but jeopardized beneficial uses - salmonid spawning and cold water aquatic life)

- Deep Creek (intensive protection necessary to maintain existing, but jeopardized beneficial uses - salmonid spawning and cold water aquatic life)
- Pole Creek (intensive protection necessary to maintain existing, but jeopardized beneficial uses - salmonid spawning and cold water aquatic life)
- Little Jacks Creek (unique ecological significance)
- Cottonwood Creek (unique ecological significance)
- Duncan Creek (outstanding high quality water, exceeding both criteria for primary contact recreation and cold water aquatic life)

**Alternative C:** Watersheds would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and water quality. Timeframes for attaining full support of beneficial uses and water quality standards would be dictated by management actions implemented for upland and riparian areas. Because this alternative emphasizes protection, enhancement and active restoration of riparian resources to complement management practices, the rate of improvement for those areas that are capable of showing improvement would more rapidly improve overall watershed health and, subsequently, water quality. The progression toward desired future conditions would occur along a steady continuum at a moderate to rapid rate, as water quality conditions respond to upland and riparian management activities. The estimated time required for all waters to meet or be making significant progress toward meeting water quality requirements (including assessment of unassessed waters and implementation of TMDL management plans) would be 10-15 years. Exceptions would occur in those areas where the management practice eliminates the dominant disturbance mechanism (in most cases, grazing or OHV impacts) via fencing or restricted use.

**Objective 7-Water Quality:** Same as Alternative A

**Management Actions:** See Management Actions by Alternatives Table

**Alternative D:** Watersheds would continue to be managed for improved productivity, health and water quality. Timeframes for attaining full support of beneficial uses and water quality standards would be dictated by management actions implemented for upland and riparian areas. Because this alternative would use a combination of active restoration and management controls, the rate of progression toward desired future conditions would occur along a steady continuum at a moderate rate, as water quality conditions respond to upland and riparian management activities. The estimated time required for all waters to meet or be making significant progress toward meeting water quality requirements (including assessment of unassessed waters and implementation of TMDL management plans) would be 15-20 years. Exceptions would occur in those areas where the management practice eliminates the dominant disturbance mechanism (in most cases, grazing or OHV impacts) via fencing or restricted use.

**Objective 7-Water Quality:** Same as Alternative A

**Management Actions:** See Management Actions Alternatives Table

**Resource Uses**

### 2.6.11 Lands and Realty

**Common to All Alternatives:**

1. Priorities for land tenure adjustments include the following: retain and acquire lands with high resource values; consolidate public lands; resolve unauthorized use conflicts; pursue public access; facilitate threatened/endangered species recovery, provide land for public purposes.

2. Public access needed on non-public land would be either acquired through exchange, purchase from willing sellers, or donation as opportunities arise and funding becomes available.
3. Manage lands that return to BLM management through withdrawal revocations in a manner that is compatible with management of the adjacent lands. If returned lands have a significant resource, recreation, wildlife or cultural value, manage those lands for continued protection and enhancement of the value identified. (See Table L-1 in the Affected Environment Section of this document)
4. Consider weed infestations in all land tenure adjustments.

**Alternative A**: Designate retention and areas available for disposal areas with emphasis on retaining lands with high resource values.

**Management Actions:** This alternative would make land tenure adjustments consistent with the existing planning document as follows:

- 1,415,501 acres of public land are available for disposal under the R&PP act or FLPMA exchange (Category I).
- 54,960 acres of public land are available for disposal under the FLPMA Sale or DLE act (Category II).
- 37,841 acres may be suitable for disposal but only under further study. (Category III) See Map L-4.

**Alternative B:** Provide land for possible disposal to enhance expansion and contribute to the economic stability of local communities while retaining high resource value land.

**Management Actions:** This alternative would make land tenure adjustments consistent with the management guidelines in Appendix L.

- Retain approximately 1,366,262 acres of public land within Zone 1.
- Designate approximately 85,070 acres of public land as Zone 2 for possible disposal under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act and FLPMA including sale. The lands are being considered for disposal because of: their proximity to the communities of Grandview and Bruneau, and Highway 78, the scattered ownership pattern, and the relatively lower resource values than those present in Zone 1.
- No lands would be available for Desert Land Entry. See Lands Map 5.

**Alternative C:** Provide land for possible disposal to enhance consolidation of ownership while retaining high resource value land.

**Management Actions:** This alternative would make land tenure adjustments consistent with the management guidelines in Appendix L.

- Retain approximately 1,441,521 acres of public land within Zone 1.
- Designate approximately 9,779 acres of public land as Zone 2 for possible disposal under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, and FLPMA including sale. Generally, these lands are being considered for disposal because of their scattered ownership pattern.
- No lands would be available for Desert Land Entry.

**Alternative D:** Provide land for possible disposal to enhance consolidation of ownership, expansion and economic stability of local communities while retaining high resource value land.

**Management Actions:** This alternative would make land tenure adjustments consistent with the management guidelines in Appendix L.

- Retain approximately 1,393,467 acres of public land within Zone 1.
- Designate approximately 57,833 acres of public land as Zone 2 for possible disposal under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, and FLPMA including sale. Generally, these lands are being

considered for disposal because of the scattered ownership pattern, proximity to developed communities and the relatively lower resource values than are present in Zone 1.

- No lands would be available for Desert Land Entry.

### 2.6.12 Livestock Grazing

**Common to All Alternatives:**

The availability of livestock forage on the public land would contribute to economically viable and sustainable ranching operations. This would sustain or enhance the economic and social input to local communities and maintain open space that preserves wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and accessibility of the land.

**Rationale:** Passage of the "Taylor Grazing Act" in 1934 was a major step toward protecting public land and resources from degradation, and toward providing for the orderly use, improvement, and development of the range. The "Federal Land Policy and Management Act" (FLPMA), passed in 1976, and the "Public Rangelands Improvement Act" (PRIA), passed in 1978, also provide authority for the management of livestock grazing on public land. Other laws, executive orders, and regulations that constrain livestock grazing practices and facilities on public lands are listed under the following sections: Cultural and Tribal Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Special Status Species, Soil, Vegetation, Vegetation-Riparian and Wetlands, Visual Resources, Water Quality, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness. These have been embodied in the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, which were adopted in 1997.

The RMP Program Guidance requires that RMP Decisions address the following issues:

1. Identify lands available or not available for livestock grazing considering the following factors:
    a. Other uses for the land, terrain characteristics
    b. Soil, vegetation and watershed characteristics
    c. The presence of undesirable vegetation, including significant invasive weed infestations
    d. The presence of other resources that may require special management protection, such as special status species, or ACECs.
2. Identify priorities for completing assessments based on specific natural resource objectives and conditions.
3. For lands available for livestock grazing identify on an area wide basis both the existing permitted use and the anticipated future permitted use with full implementation of the RMP while maintaining a thriving ecological balance and multiple-use relationship.
4. Identify guidelines and criteria for future allotment specific adjustments in permitted use, season of use and grazing management practices.

**Assumptions:**

- Allotment Assessments/Evaluations and subsequent grazing permit modifications would receive highest priority in areas where they have not been previously completed to meet the current schedule.
- Allotment Assessments/Evaluations and subsequent grazing permit modifications would receive priority based upon the potential level of livestock grazing impacts to other resources.
- Grazing management practices (timing, duration, distribution) would be the focus of the grazing permit modifications following the initial Allotment Assessments/Evaluations.
- Changes in the level of permitted use and/or additional adjustments to grazing management practices would be the focus of grazing permit modifications following subsequent Allotment Assessments/Evaluations.
- Supporting livestock facilities that are necessary to implement changes in grazing management practices (intensity, timing, duration, distribution) would be authorized.

- Restoration and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation treatments would be designed and scheduled to complement existing grazing management practices and facilities to the maximum possible extent.

**Alternative A:** Continue Present Management in accordance with the Bruneau MFP, agency policy and regulatory/statutory guidance

Although the MFP had large areas proposed for land treatments, relatively few had been completed when the grazing program emphasis shifted to modification of grazing permits to incorporate water quality and riparian considerations in the early 1990's. Some substantial stream exclosures have been completed, partially as a consequence of that emphasis. The Bruneau Planning Unit was stratified into priority areas for sage grouse habitat protection and restoration in the late 1990's, which has shifted the emphasis and rationale for any land treatments that are done. The recent renewed emphasis on fuels management has also refocused land treatment emphasis on maintaining shrub-steppe communities in areas where juniper encroachment is occurring. A prescribed burn project has recently been completed.

Few acres are included in Special Designations under the MFP, with correspondingly few constraints to grazing management practices or to construction of facilities within the Planning Unit as a whole. Wilderness Study Area status effectively constrains construction of new facilities or increases in the amount of livestock use from that occurring in 1976 within their boundaries.

**Alternative B:** Implement a modest level of management to maintain good resource conditions and improve resources where appropriate with emphasis on increased resource use.

Under this alternative, there would be fewer acres of Special Designations that would impose constraints to construction of livestock facilities. Livestock facilities, particularly, exclosures and pasture fences and development of off-stream water, would be emphasized as means of facilitating improvement in sensitive resources while maintaining existing levels of livestock use. There would also be fewer limitations on the variety of grazing management practices that could be implemented, because the necessary supporting facilities could be constructed.

The Management Actions under this alternative would impose fewer changes to existing grazing management practices and fewer constraints to construction of livestock facilities than Alternatives C or D as mitigation for existing livestock impacts. Although existing areas of intact shrub-steppe communities would be maintained and areas of nearly intact shrub-steppe communities would continue to improve; large areas of shrub-steppe where the original understory has been severely reduced or even converted to annual grasses would be managed primarily to maintain whatever remnants components still persist. This alternative tacitly recognizes that major improvements in those areas would require large scale restoration treatments and/ or major disruption to existing livestock operations.

No large scale restoration of annual grasslands is planned under this alternative, since they meet minimal needs for site protection. Areas where juniper is encroaching into substantially intact shrub-steppe communities would be treated to retard or reverse juniper dominance. Seedings that were created primarily to supply livestock forage so that grazing management plans and adjudications could be completed would continue to be managed and maintained primarily for that purpose. Efforts to further improve lentic wetlands and riparian areas along streams would be substantial, but less aggressive than under Alternatives C and D. Standards for protection of sensitive animal and plant populations would emphasize protection of core habitats and strongholds rather than isolated locations.

Levels of permitted use could increase in allotments or pastures where significant conflicts with other resource needs are not identified.

**Alternative C:** Implement a high level of management to maintain and improve resource conditions where appropriate while allowing compatible resource use.

Under this alternative, there would be more acres of Special Designations that would impose constraints to construction of livestock facilities. Livestock facilities, particularly, exclosures and pasture fences and development of off-stream water, would be de-emphasized as a means of facilitating improvement in sensitive resources in larger areas. There would also be more limitations on the variety of grazing management practices that could be implemented in these areas, because the necessary supporting facilities would not be constructed.

The Management Actions under this alternative would impose more changes to existing grazing management practices and more constraints to construction of livestock facilities than Alternatives C or D. Large areas of shrub-steppe where the original understory has been severely reduced or even converted to annual grasses would be managed more aggressively to encourage more rapid recovery of remnant components. Large scale restoration treatments and more extensive modification of existing grazing management practices are proposed for those areas, with less focus upon minimizing disruption to existing livestock operations.

Large scale restoration of annual grasslands is also planned under this alternative, since they have limited value as wildlife habitat and since many ecosystem processes function poorly or are entirely lacking within them. Areas where juniper is encroaching into substantially intact shrub-steppe communities would be treated to retard or reverse juniper dominance. The shrub and forb component of seedings that were created primarily to supply livestock forage or to stabilize burned areas would be restored in priority restoration areas for sage grouse. Efforts to improve lentic wetlands and riparian areas along streams would be more aggressive than under Alternatives B and A, and isolated sensitive animal and plant populations would receive greater emphasis for protection.

Levels of permitted use could be reduced in allotments or pastures where significant conflicts with other resource needs exist and where feasible modifications to grazing management practices alone would not result in sufficiently rapid recovery. Other resource needs could also impose constraints upon construction of livestock facilities that would effectively preclude necessary changes to timing, duration, or distribution of grazing use and instead require reductions in intensity of use.

**Alternative D:** Implement management that balances public resource use opportunities while maintaining and improving resource conditions

Alternative D is more like Alternative C for most management actions involving Special Designations that would influence the attainment of the goal for Livestock Grazing than like Alternatives A or B. Alternative D is intermediate in rate of treatment, rate of recovery, level of monitoring, level of constraint and level of impact to existing livestock operations between Alternative B and Alternative C for most management actions involving grazing management practices and supporting facilities.

### 2.6.13 Minerals (Leasable, Locatable, Mineral Materials)

#### 2.6.13.1Leasable Minerals

Common to all alternatives:

Mineral leases authorized in the Bruneau planning unit would be subject to the following lease terms and stipulations:

- Open to Leasing with Standard lease terms: These are the standard terms and conditions that are applied to all leases (section 6 of Form 3110-11, "Offer to Lease and Lease for Oil and Gas," and

Form 3200-4, "Offer to Lease and Lease for Geothermal Resources"). They are the only conditions applied to a lease where additional measures are not considered necessary to protect resource values.

- Open to Leasing with Special stipulations: These are specific conditions imposed at the time of lease issuance which modify the original terms and conditions of the lease (standard lease terms). In this planning area, these stipulations fall into three categories, described below:

  1. No Surface Occupancy (NSO) - This stipulation is placed on leases only if analysis of the lands to be leased clearly shows that the resource values (such as sensitive plants, cultural sites or areas of high scenic values) are such that they cannot be adequately protected by the standard stipulations or less restrictive special stipulations such as timing limitations. In the development of this stipulation, less restrictive stipulations were evaluated and found to be inadequate to protect known and suspected values contained on the parcel. The no leasing alternative was also evaluated, but was considered unnecessary to protect the resources.
  2. Timing limitation - This stipulation is applied to land where the resource values (such as raptor nesting, sage grouse leks, traditional plant gathering areas or big game winter range) cannot be adequately protected by the standard lease terms, but yet do not require a yearlong restriction on leasing operations. Less restrictive stipulations (such as controlled surface use or standard stipulations) were considered in developing this stipulation, but it was concluded that they would not afford sufficient protection to the known and suspected resources found on the parcel(s).
  3. Other special stipulations – These are stipulations that may be applied to a lease in cases where a resource requires protection, but either covers a large geographic region (i.e., special status plants, cultural resources and animals) which are found throughout the planning area, but not all locations are known, or information pertaining to that resource may be incomplete and is applied to all leases. Application of the standard lease terms was considered in developing special stipulation(s) but found to provide insufficient safeguards to resolve resource concerns.

- Closed to leasing: This restriction involves both nondiscretionary and discretionary closures.

  Nondiscretionary closures, such as designated Wilderness Areas and National Wild and Scenic Rivers, are the result of Congressional action and are not displayed or analyzed in this plan.

  Discretionary closures are the result of management decisions arrived at through the planning process. They involve land where the resource values are considered so important that they outweigh any economic return that can be expected from mineral development and environmental impacts resulting from lease operations could irreparably damage those resources. Less restrictive measures were considered in identifying these closures, but were considered inadequate to protect resource values contained on the parcel(s).

  Geophysical exploration operations would also be subject to the types of restrictions identified above, except for activities requiring little or no surface disturbance, such as gravity and magnetic surveys.

**Alternative A:** Provide for the development of leasable minerals in the Bruneau planning unit by keeping public lands in the planning unit open to energy and mineral leasing except in Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), lands classified under C&MU Act and lands identified as suitable for designation as a NWSR.

**Alternatives B, C and D:** Same as alternative A. Public lands would be kept open to mineral leasing subject to restrictions imposed to protect other resource values.

### 2.6.13.2Locatable Minerals

**Common to all Alternatives**
The Mining Law of 1872 gives the public the right to locate and develop mining claims on public lands. The Mining and Mineral Policy Act of 1970 declares that it is the continuing policy of the Federal government to foster and encourage private enterprise in the development of domestic mineral resources. Section 102 of FLPMA directs that public land is to be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals and other resources. The National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 restates the need to implement the 1970 act and requires the Secretary of the Interior to improve the quality of minerals data used in land use planning.

Section 102 of FLPMA also states that public land will managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water and archaeological values. BLM administrative actions have closed selected sites to location under the Mining Law. WSA's would be available for location of mining claims; however, activities on these claims would be limited in accordance with BLM's IMPLWR. Mining claims located in WSA's not designated by Congress for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System would be released from IMPLWR criteria. WSA additions would remain open to mineral location, however, mineral operations would become subject to IMPLWR criteria. No surface-disturbing activities requiring reclamation would be allowed unless the operation had established "grandfathered" uses or valid existing rights.

**Alternative A:** Provide maximum opportunity for development of locatable mineral resources by keeping public lands in the planning unit open to mineral location and development except in selected BLM administrative sites and developed recreation sites. Protective withdrawals would be pursued, subject to Secretarial approval and, for proposals greater than 5,000 acres, to congressional review, for lands selected for designation as a National Wild and Scenic River, for ACEC's, and for proposed BLM recreation sites when development is approved. These withdrawals would be for a maximum of 20 years and subject to review at the end of that period to determine the necessity of continuing the withdrawal.

**Description of Alternative**:

1. The public lands within the Bruneau planning unit would be managed in accordance with the provisions of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the National Minerals and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 and consistent with other applicable statutory obligations.
2. Withdrawal from mineral entry would be recommended for certain recreation areas, ACEC's, and lands that become designated as a National Wild and Scenic River.

**Alternatives B, C, and D:** Same as alternative A. Public lands would be kept open to mineral location subject to restrictions imposed to protect other resource values.

### 2.6.13.3 Salable Minerals

**Common to all Alternatives:**
The Materials Act of July 31, 1947, as amended, gave BLM the authority to dispose of sand, gravel, and other mineral and vegetative materials that are not subject to leasing under the mineral leasing act or location under the mining laws. This authority applies to sale and free use of these materials. Section 102 of FLPMA directs that the public land will be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals and other resources. BLM mineral policy (1984) states that public land shall remain open and available for mineral exploration and development unless withdrawal or other administrative action is clearly justified in the national interest.

Section 102 of FLPMA also states that public land will be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water and archaeological values.

Designated WSA's have been closed to saleable mineral disposals by BLM management actions. Any WSA's, or portions thereof, not designated as wilderness by congress would be open to mineral material disposal unless closed by other management actions. Saleable mineral development would not be permitted in ACEC's, in additions to WSA's, in streams administratively suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS, in BLM administrative sites, and in developed and potential BLM recreation sites

**Alternative A:** Existing mineral material sites would be developed to their full potential for beneficial use by the public and by government agencies. Additional saleable minerals in the planning unit would be made available to the public and government agencies as needed by seeking new community pit sites and by permitting new negotiated sales and free use sites.

**Alternatives B, C, and D:** Same as alternative A. Public lands would be kept available for mineral material disposal subject to restrictions imposed to protect other resource values.

### 2.6.14 Recreation

**Common to All Alternatives:**

FLPMA recognizes recreational use of public land as an important aspect of multiple use management. . BLM Manual 8300 directs BLM to designate discrete areas as Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs), where there is a need for more intensive management or a higher level of financial investment, or where there are high levels of conflict with other uses or resources than is typical of most BLM land. (See map 9 for existing SRMAs and rec maps 10, 11 and 12 for proposed SRMAs by alternative). All land not designated as SRMAs is designated as an Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMAs). ERMAs are lands where limited recreation management emphasis or financial investment is required to provide extensive, unstructured recreation activities.

Most recreation use of BLM-managed lands in the west, as well as in the Bruneau Planning Unit, can be characterized as dispersed, undeveloped and unstructured. BLM's national recreation policy is expressed in *Recreation 2000 Plan and Update* as follows: "BLM would emphasize resource-dependent recreation opportunities that typify the vast Western landscapes…while giving the public the freedom to choose how to spend its leisure time on BLM land within the constraints of achieving healthy ecosystems, resolving user conflict, and providing for visitor safety." This plan envisions that recreation development under any alternative is limited in scope and scale, and that the developments that do occur are principally for resource protection or as staging areas for dispersed recreation use and not as visitor attractions in and of themselves.

This plan will manage for a variety of recreation experiences by using the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) approach to identify specific areas where certain types of recreation opportunity are available for the public. (see recreation appendix 1 for definitions of ROS) Most of the Planning Unit acreage under all alternatives would be managed to emphasize undeveloped, semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences with limited managerial presence and minimal facility development. In the Owyhee Front, where there is intensive motorized OHV use, depending on alternative, acreages ranging from 54,000 to 164,000 acres would be managed for roaded natural recreation experiences where the visitor can expect to find groomed OHV trails, signs, maps and kiosks and fairly frequent encounters with regulatory or enforcement personnel.

Monitoring: Monitoring would include periodic patrols to: check signs, road and trail condition, facility maintenance; to ensure visitor compliance with regulations; to establish baseline information to determine visitor use and impacts of visitor use; and to determine the need for additional development to protect areas from recreation-caused impact.

Management actions described under specific SRMAs/ERMAs in this document are not exhaustive. Activity-level SRMA management plans would be developed for each SRMA. Each plan would involve all potential management partners and provide specific detail of the type, nature and extent of recreation facilities, services and any required use limitations or regulations needed to ensure public safety, protect vulnerable resources, resolve conflicts between users, and meet current and foreseeable recreation user demands.

The general public as well as commercial and competitive recreation permit holders would be informed of proper user etiquette through programs such as "Leave No Trace" and "Tread Lightly". Signs, brochures, maps, kiosks and other interpretive and educational outreach approaches would be used to serve and inform the public and meet management objectives.

**Alternative A:** Under Alternative A, on public lands in the Bruneau Planning Unit, recreation use would continue to be managed as in the past. Current Special Recreation management Areas (SRMAs) would be retained: Bruneau-Jarbidge SRMA, 26,616 acres, Jacks Creek SRMA, 5,934 acres, Owyhee Canyonlands SRMA, 5,267 acres, Deep Creek SRMA, 5,918 acres. All roads and trails in the SRMAs would be restricted to designated routes, the remaining area would be open to cross country OHV use. Roads and trails would be routed away from sensitive bighorn sheep lambing areas on canyon rims and walls. Commercial recreation permit holders would not be allowed to establish camps in SRMAs within one mile of canyon rims.

**Alternative B:** Under Alternative B, cross-country, off-road/off trail OHV use would be prohibited. The current SRMAs as described in Alternative A would be retained. In addition, this Alternative would create a new 191,996 acre Owyhee Front SRMA to manage intensive OHV and other recreational use there. 164,715 acres of the SRMA would be devoted to managing motorized use; 27,281 acres would emphasize non-motorized use. (See Rec map 5).

Most of the Bruneau Planning Unit would be managed to provide for semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation experience. In these areas, the visitor would find occasional regulatory or directional signing, some information kiosks with maps established at major portal entry points off major highways or heavily-used routes, occasional encounters with regulatory or enforcement personnel, and fairly infrequent contact with other visitors. About 80% of the time visitors could expect to encounter 6 – 15 other parties a day while traveling on trails or water routes; Visitors could usually expect to see 6 or fewer parties while in camp.

The motorized portion of the Owyhee Front SRMA would be principally managed for roaded natural recreation experience. Here the visitor would encounter a well-signed, mapped and over a portion of the area, groomed, motorized trail experience. Signs would occur at regular intervals, loop trail opportunities for varied skill levels and vehicle types would be emphasized, and regulatory and enforcement personnel would be regularly encountered.

**Alternative C**: Under Alternative C, cross-country, off-road/off trail OHV use would be prohibited.

The 26,616 acre Bruneau-Jarbidge SRMA, the 5,267 acre Owyhee Canyonlands SRMA and the 5,918 acre Deep Creek SRMA would be retained at their current size.

Alternative C contains 159,070 acres that lie within one mile of the major canyon rims within current WSA boundaries that would be managed to provide primitive recreation experience. This area would be closed to motorized and mechanized vehicle use, and would be managed to maximize for primitive and unconfined recreation experience. A visitor could expect to find few if any regulatory or directional signs or kiosks, and could expect, most of the time, to see fewer than 6 parties on trails and boatable streams, and fewer than 3 parties while in camp. Regulatory and enforcement presence would be rarely encountered here.

As in Alternative B, most of the Bruneau Planning Unit would be managed to provide for semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation experience. In these areas, the visitor would find occasional regulatory or directional signing, some information kiosks with maps established at major portal entry points off major highways or heavily-used routes, occasional encounters with regulatory or enforcement personnel, and fairly infrequent contact with other visitors. About 80% of the time visitors could expect to encounter 6 – 15 other parties a day while traveling on trails or water routes; Visitors could expect to see 6 or fewer parties while in camp.

A 54,665 acre motorized portion of the Owyhee Front SRMA would be principally managed for roaded natural recreation experience. Here the visitor would encounter a well-signed, mapped and over a portion of the area, groomed, motorized trail experience. Signs would occur at regular intervals, loop trail opportunities for varied skill levels and vehicle types would be emphasized, and regulatory and enforcement personnel would be regularly encountered.

Under Alternative C, in addition to the restrictions noted in Alternative A, recreational use of critical rim and cliff bighorn sheep habitat would be prohibited during the months of March, April and May.

**Alternative D:** Under this alternative, the current Bruneau-Jarbidge, Owyhee Canyonlands and Deep Creek SRMAs would be retained. A 35,351-acre Three Tables SRMA would be established to manage the conflicts between growing recreation use and sensitive cultural and Tribal values. A 125,164-acre Owyhee Front SRMA would be established to manage recreational use in this intensively-used OHV area.

As in Alternative B, most of the Bruneau Planning Unit would be managed to provide for semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized recreation experience. In these areas, the visitor would find occasional regulatory or directional signing, some information kiosks with maps established at major portal entry points off major highways or heavily-used routes, occasional encounters with regulatory or enforcement personnel, and fairly infrequent contact with other visitors. About 80% of the time visitors could expect to encounter 6 – 15 other parties a day while traveling on trails or water routes; Visitors could expect to see 6 or fewer parties while in camp.

### 2.6.15 Renewable Energy

See Lands and Realty

### 2.6.16 Transportation

**Common to All Alternatives:** Federal regulations (43 CFR Part 8340) and BLM Planning guidance require the BLM to designate all BLM-administered lands as either open, limited (limited to existing or limited to designated routes) or closed to off-highway (OHV) vehicle use. These designations are required to help meet public demand for OHV activities (recreational and all other activities requiring the use of OHVs), protect natural and cultural resources, ensure public safety, and minimize conflicts among users.

Unless otherwise specified, OHV use designations are in effect yearlong. Under all alternatives, OHV use in existing or proposed ACECs is limited to designated routes, unless specified closed.

In WSAs, the use of motorized and mechanized vehicles is already legally limited to designated routes (those roads and vehicular ways noted at the time of original wilderness inventory, and still in existence). Motorized vehicle use there is managed in accordance with *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review, 8550-1.* Should a WSA not be designated as wilderness, vehicle use would still be limited to designated routes. Vehicle use in suitable National Wild and Scenic River corridors and in VRM Class I areas would also be limited to designated routes. Should any acreage in the Planning Unit be designated wilderness by Congress, all such acreage would be automatically closed to motorized and mechanized vehicle use unless otherwise specified in the enabling legislation.

Emergency OHV closures or use limits may be implemented as necessary to protect natural or cultural resources, reduce or eliminate user conflicts, or protect the public from hazard areas.

Commercial, competitive, and other organized OHV activities would be managed with Special Recreation Use Permits (SRUPs), with such activities allowed when consistent with protecting resource values and meeting other management objectives. Recreation and administrative sites would be designated as limited to designated routes unless otherwise posted closed.

Closures or use limits would not apply to certain OHV uses or purposes as described in CFR 8340.0-5, such as law enforcement, search and rescue, military use in time of war or national emergency or BLM administrative use. Additionally, authorized users, at the discretion of the Authorized Officer, could be allowed motorized access not allowed to the general public. Authorized users could include grazing permittees, researchers, and others carrying out authorized activities under a permit, or other written authorization. Such authorizations would be not be general, but would be limited to specific time periods and numbers of trips, would only be granted for legitimate and specific purposes, and conditions of the authorization would be written as stipulations in the permit or authorizing document. Maintenance of administrative routes would be the minimum required to serve the administrative purpose. If the administrative purpose were to cease, the route would be closed.

The vast majority of acreage in alternatives, B, C, and D is proposed to be managed as *Limited to Designated.* The number and extent of the routes that lie within this broad general classification would vary widely by alternative, but the actual route network is not specified in this RMP. After an alternative is selected, the RMP/EIS is signed and approved, and the RMP implementation phase begins, routes will be analyzed for a variety of characteristics, including their recreational potential, their conflicts with other values and their usefulness for commercial and administrative purposes. Based on this analysis, and on additional public input, a route network will be selected, and a separate decision issued. If, for example, Alternative B is selected, the final route network that is authorized is likely to have higher road and trail mileage, fewer seasonal restrictions, fewer route closures, and more emphasis on motorized access than if Alternatives C or D are selected.

**Alternative A:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Open: | 1,125,988 acres |
| Limited to Existing or | |
| Limited to Designated Road and Trails: | 322,349 acres |
| Closed: | 1468 acres |

Current management of OHVs would continue, including continued designation of 72% of the Planning Unit as open to cross-country, off-route OHV use. Vehicular use within WSAs suitable National Wild and Scenic River segments and VRM Class I areas would be limited to designated routes as would the

Owyhee Bighorn Sheep ACEC, the Triplet Butte ACEC and the Cottonwood Creek ACEC. An OHV closure in the 1468-acre Mud Flat Oolite exclosure area would remain in effect. In the Owyhee Front, BLM would continue to mark routes, provide visitor information and maintain some heavily-used OHV routes.

**Alternative B:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Open: | 0 acres |
| Limited to Designated: | 519,576 acres |
| Limited to Existing: | 930,257 acres |
| Closed: | 1468 acres |

Under this alternative, as under Alternatives C and D, no open areas would be designated, meaning that off-road, off-trail, cross-country use would be prohibited over the entire Planning Unit. The decision to completely end cross-country vehicle use over all alternatives except the No Change Alternative reflects a growing public consensus that there would be ample and diverse recreation opportunies available using a designated route system, that cross-country use is a rising threat to natural and cultural values, and that in some cases, the uncontrolled expansion of user-created routes has led to a deterioration in the quality of recreation experiences for the public. Alternatives B, C, and D would afford the public good motorized vehicle access to most areas in the Planning Unit. An OHV Closure in the 1468 acre Mud Flat Oolite exclosure would remain in effect. The remainder of the Planning Unit would limited to designated roads and trails.

This alternative would place relatively more emphasis on motorized access to public lands. Over the life of the Plan, under Alternative B, in addition to establishment of an extensive route network of general use roads and trails shared by all users, up to 620 miles of miles of trail would be specifically designated for the use of motorized vehicles like ATVs, motorcycles, or four-wheel-drive trucks or jeeps, and up to 140 miles of equestrian, hiking and mountain bike specific trails could be established.

**Alternative C:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Open: | 0 acres |
| Limited to Designated: | 1,289,267 acres |
| Closed: | 160,538 acres |

Under this alternative, no open areas would be designated, meaning that off-road, off-trail, cross-country use would be prohibited over the entire Planning Unit. Under this alternative, 159,070 acres that lie within one mile of canyon rims within current WSAs would be closed to all motorized and mechanized use. 1468 acres within the Mud Flat Oolite exclosure would remain closed to vehicle use. The remainder of the Planning Unit would be limited to designated roads and trails.

This alternative would de-emphasize road and trail development in general, compared to the other alternatives and place, relatively, the least emphasis on motorized access to public lands, but would still provide good vehicle access to most parts of the Planning Unit. Over the life of the Plan, under Alternative C, in addition to the establishment of an extensive network of general use roads and trails shared by all users, up to 105 miles of miles of trail could be designated for the specific use of a variety of motorized vehicles like ATVs, motorcycles, or four-wheel-drive trucks or jeeps, and up to 60 miles of trail could be developed for mountain bike, equestrian and hiking specific use.

**Alternative D:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Open: | 0 acres |
| Limited to Designated: | 1,449,805 acres |
| Closed: | 1468 acres |

Under this alternative, no open areas would be designated, meaning that off-road, off-trail, cross-country use would be prohibited over the entire Planning Unit. 1468 acres within the Mud Flat Oolite exclosure would remain closed to vehicle use. The remainder of the Planning Unit would be limited to designated roads and trails.

This alternative would place moderate emphasis on motorized access to public lands; less than Alternative B, more than Alternative C, but would still provide good vehicle access to most parts of the Planning Unit. Over the life of the Plan, under Alternative D, in addition to the establishment of an extensive network of general use roads and trails shared by all users, up to 210 miles of trail would be specifically designated for the use of a variety of motorized vehicles like ATVs, motorcycles, or four-wheel-drive trucks or jeeps, and up to 80 miles of trail could be developed for mountain biking, equestrian and hiking-specific use.

### 2.6.17 Utility and Communication Corridors (Land Use Authorizations)

Common to All Alternatives:

1. Prohibit new waste disposal sites, and the storage or disposal of hazardous waste on public lands.
2. Incorporate weed prevention methods in all use authorizations.
3. Meet public needs for use authorizations such as rights-of-way, leases, permits consistent with other resource objectives. Encourage right-of-way applicants to co-locate their facilities within other rights-of-way where uses are compatible to minimize impacts to other resource values.
4. Consider all use authorization applications except for uses within exclusion areas.

**Alternative A:** Keep the existing ROW corridor and designate no others in the planning effort.

**Management Actions:** All major utility transportation lines would be located within the previously identified corridor to the extent practical.

**Rationale and Description of Alternative**: The only existing right-of-way corridor in the Bruneau Planning Unit is the El Paso natural gas corridor that crosses the planning unit in a northeast to the southwesterly direction. It is a ¼ mile wide and currently contains two natural gas pipelines that divide two wilderness study areas

Under Alternative A, we would continue to have the one corridor. Any new applications for major utility rights-of-way or use areas would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Application processing for major use rights-of-way outside a designated corridor and use area requires more analysis and public involvement than those within a designated area.

**Alternative B, C, D:** To meet anticipated future energy needs, designate new ROW corridor and ROW use areas.

**Rationale and Description of Alternative:** After consulting with industry and the Western Utility Group, we do not expect the need for additional energy pipeline routes. However, we have learned that there is a potential need for an electrical transmission line corridor to cross the northern tip of the planning unit.

IPCO has asked that we establish the northern tip corridor route for a 500 kV electrical transmission line they foresee a need for in the next 10 years due to the increased population of the Treasure Valley. IPCO plans to transport power from the Midpoint Substation near Jerome, Idaho to a proposed substation to be

built on private land approximately six miles south of Melba. The corridor route, proposed to be ½-mile wide, would cross the northern part of the planning unit. However it should be noted that this is an optional route that IPCO would use only if they are not able to use their preferred route that crosses the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (*Lands Map 9*).

President Bush's National Energy Policy requires that BLM increase and diversify our Nation's sources of both traditional and alternative energy resources, improve our energy transportation network and ensure sound environmental management. Each BLM Office has been tasked with identifying potential energy development areas.

An areas potential for wind power development is based not only on it's wind speed but also it's proximity to major transmission lines. Using GIS technology, we combined the wind speed data collected and provided by the National Research Energy Laboratory with the location data of major transmission lines for the Bruneau Planning Area. We were able to identify an area that has sufficient wind speed and while still being close enough to transmission lines to transport the energy once it was produced.

Proper planning streamlines the right-of-way authorization process for both industry and government. By designating ROW corridors and ROW use areas, we direct needed development in the most acceptable areas and in the most acceptable manner.

Planning and corridor designation not only streamlines the processes for use authorizations that allow for commodity production on public land, but it also protects the resources by confining rights-of-ways within a designated area to the extent practical. Ultimately, utilizing corridors has the least impact on the natural resources.

**Management Actions - Alternative B, C, D:**

Designate the additional ROW corridor proposed by Idaho Power Company *(Lands Map 9)*. This corridor would meet the public's foreseeable need for electricity. (What about gas pipelines?)

Designate approximately 2,394 acres as shown on *Lands Map 10* for a Right-of-Way Use Area.

These lands are being considered for designation as a Right-of-Way use area because of the wind speed and proximity to a major power line. In addition, these lands are outside of any areas with special designations such as Wilderness Study Area, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic River Areas.

**Other**

**2.6.18 Fire Ecology**

The Boise District BLM is responsible for suppressing all wildfires on public land when they threaten life, property, or resource values. Suppression priorities include protecting life and property followed by protecting fire sensitive native vegetation and other resource values. BLM also suppresses fires starting on private land if they threaten adjacent public land or if assistance is requested by The State of Idaho or rural fire departments. In addition to suppression responsibility, the Amended 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review directs the BLM to integrate "fire, as a critical natural process, into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, across agency boundaries, and would be based upon best available science." All use of fire for resource management requires a formal prescription and must be consistent with the District Fire Management Plan.

Important resources identified for protection from wildfire include salt desert shrub and low elevation sagebrush steppe communities, sage grouse source habitat, and big game winter ranges. BLM is required

to rehabilitate burned areas when they have been damaged by wildfire. Most rehabilitation efforts occur on the low elevation sagebrush and salt desert shrub communities. These communities are highly susceptible to cheatgrass invasion and if not seeded following wildfire would usually cross a threshold into a highly flammable cheatgrass dominated community. Nonnative perennial grasses are typically seeded on these sites following fire because they are the most successful in competing with cheatgrass and are more available. Native perennial grasses are used when they are available, adapted to the sites, and meet the resource objectives. Native shrubs are included in most all fire rehabilitation seedings in an effort to restore wildlife habitat and plant community structure. Rehabilitation efforts are often unsuccessful on these harsh sites. When they are successful, there is always the chance that these areas would reburn resulting in the loss of the seeded shrubs. The difficulties with rehabilitating these areas and the continued occurrence of wildfire will unfortunately result in the continue loss of these native shrub communities. Our suppression and rehabilitation efforts would at least slow the loss of these communities and reduce the expansion of cheatgrass dominated sites by restoring perennial vegetation to these areas.

The higher elevation communities are adapted to periodic fire, less susceptible to cheatgrass invasion and can usually recover by simply being rested from livestock use after a fire. The boundary between the high and low elevation communities is gradual, but generally occurs around 5,000 foot in elevation, 12 inches in precipitation, and between the mesic and frigid temperature regimes. It also varies slightly with aspect, soil productivity, and range condition.

Fire maintains these communities by controlling juniper expansion. It also maintains vegetative mosaics across landscapes to provide biologically diverse habitats. Mechanical treatments can also be used for controlling junipers in areas where fire is not desirable, or can be used to as a preburn treatment for prescribed fires.

**Common to all Alternatives:** For all alternatives, all fires would be suppressed within the low elevations (Bruneau/Grandview and Grasmere polygons) as well as all wildfires in the PU which threaten life and property. Limited suppression could occur on remotely located fire-adapted areas which do not threaten life, property, or resources. In accordance with the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, wildland fire use would be incorporated into upper elevation polygons (Upper Castle Creek and Riddle Polygons) where and when fire would have beneficial effects to the resources. The Upper Castle Creek Polygon has the best opportunities for beneficial use of wildfire since most of this polygon is undergoing various levels of juniper encroachment. The Boise District Fire Management Plan which is periodically updated determines the specifics of wildland fire use for these areas.

**Alternative A:** This alternative emphases wildland fire use for maintaining upland shrub and aspen communities and minimizes the use of prescribed fire.

Juniper would be kept from expanding beyond it's current distribution by controlling it on approximately 5% of its range per decade through the use of wild land fire use, with minimal use of prescribed fire and cutting treatments. Fires to control Juniper in sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, and other sensitive sagebrush-dependent species habitat would improve or maintain habitat for these species over the long term.

**Alternative B:** The upper elevation shrub and aspen communities (Riddle and Upper Castle Creek polygons) would be maintained and restored by controlling juniper on approximately 20% of its range per decade through the use of wildland fire use, prescribed fire and mechanical treatments such as cutting, chopping chipping, chaining, etc., and approved herbicides. Where appropriate and after providing for public and firefighter safety, wildfires would be managed to meet this objective. Juniper products would be made available to offset control costs and to provide income to the local economy. Prescribed fire treatments would consider effects to sage grouse and other wildlife.

In order to reduce the risk of wildfire and subsequent loss of low elevation shrub communities, fuel hazards would be reduced along highways, rights-of-ways and other ignition corridors through the use prescribed fire, approved herbicides, intensive livestock grazing, mowing, greenstrips, and other developed methods.

**Alternative C:** This Alternative differs from Alternative B in that prescribed fire and vegetation treatments in sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, and other sensitive sagebrush-dependent species habitat would improve or maintain habitat for these species over the long term (as opposed to just considering the effects to these species).

**Alternative D:** This Alternative differs from Alternative B & C in the amount of juniper control that would occur. Juniper would be controlled on 15% of its range per decade as opposed to 20% under Alternatives B and C. Like Alternative C, prescribed fire and vegetation treatments in sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, and other sensitive sagebrush-dependent species habitat would improve or maintain habitat for these species over the long term, but at a lesser amount than under alternatives B & C.

### 2.6.19 Special Designations
### 2.6.19.1Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
**Common to All Alternatives**

**Management Actions:** Management actions in the existing ACECs are primarily related to construction of rangeland management projects and minerals management (See Table Objectives/Management Actions 1). Management actions related to proposed ACECs include: the ability to issue rights-of-way; construction of rangeland management projects; livestock grazing management; fire suppression and rehabilitation activities; management of leasable, salable, and locatable minerals; and issuance of recreation permits, maintenance of visual resources, and management of OHMV use The degree of protection proposed would be related to the potential threats to the resources in the proposed ACEC.

**Alternative A:** This alternative would continue present management of the four ACECs and Little Jacks Creek pRNA with no increase in the size of the areas. There are currently 56,757 acres designated as ACECs.

**Alternative B:** The proposed ACECs would focus on maintaining unique areas and occupied habitat for a variety of BLM sensitive plant and animal species. Five new ACECs, including approximately 197,146 acres, would be established that include portions of the Bruneau River; Little Jacks, Big Jacks, Camas, and Pole creeks; and the Sugar Valley Badlands and Horse Hill areas. The primary species that would benefit from ACEC designation include 12 special status plant species, California bighorn sheep, redband trout, and Bruneau hot springsnail. Paleontological and cultural resources would also benefit from ACEC designations. Livestock grazing and recreation use are the primary threats in these areas.

The Mud Flat Oolite ACEC would be increased from five acres to 1,468 acres (included in total acreage above). Management activities in the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC remain unchanged. The Cottonwood Creek and Triplet Butte ACECs would be included in the Jacks Creek and Bruneau River proposed ACECs.

**Bruneau River** – The proposed ACEC would protect recreation opportunities and core California bighorn sheep habitat associated with the Bruneau River. The river and its tributaries support redband trout, Bruneau hot springsnails, and suitable habitat for bull trout. Other values include special status species and paleontological, geological, and cultural resources. The east side of the canyon is currently

designated as an ACEC. Management actions would focus on minimizing recreational impacts to bighorn sheep and springsnails. Limited surface disturbance would be allowed in fire suppression and lower elevation rehabilitation efforts.

**Camas Creek/Pole Creek** – The proposed ACEC would expand an area currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The expanded area would protect redband trout, mottled and Paiute sculpin, and spotted frog populations; representative low and big sagebrush communities; and additional cultural resources. Management actions would focus on minimizing impacts from recreational uses and livestock use in riparian areas.

**Horse Hill** – The proposed ACEC would protect an area that has the greatest diversity of species and number of populations of sensitive plants in the planning area. The area is characterized by highly erosive soils and paleontological resources. Management actions would emphasize protection of plant and soil resources by restricting OHMV activity, mineral extraction, and livestock use.

**Jacks Creek** – The proposed ACEC would focus primarily on the canyonlands of Big Jacks, Little Jacks, and Shoofly creeks. It would protect core habitat for representative populations of California bighorn sheep and redband trout. Adjacent uplands in the immediate vicinity of the canyons would protect some plateau areas used by bighorn sheep and the watersheds associated with redband habitat. The canyonlands are becoming increasingly popular with a wide range of recreationists. Management actions would focus on maintaining current conditions by limiting impacts from recreation and livestock uses. Limited surface disturbance would be allowed in fire suppression, but natural rehabilitation would be emphasized.

**Mud Flat Oolite** – The proposal would expand the existing ACEC to include several populations of special status plant species and paleontological resources. Management actions would be consistent with current actions that prohibit OHMV, mineral extraction, and livestock uses.

**Sugar Valley Badlands** - The proposed ACEC would protect a variety of sensitive plant species and reference quality salt desert shrub communities. Management actions would focus on reducing impacts from OHMV use, livestock use, and annual grass invasion.

**Alternative C:** Proposed ACECs would include suitable and occupied habitats for a variety of sensitive plant and animal populations, reference condition upland plant communities, and cultural resources. Nine new ACECs, including approximately 336,849 acres, would be established that include portions of the Bruneau River; Little Jacks, Big Jacks, Castle, Camas, and Pole creeks; and Blue, Turner, and Wild Horse tables. Protection of sensitive plant species is the primary reason for designating three of the nine new ACECs (Horse Hill, Sugar Valley Badlands, and Mulford's milkvetch). The primary species that would benefit from ACEC designation include at least 15 special status plant species, California bighorn sheep, redband trout, and Bruneau hot springsnail. Paleontological resources would also benefit from ACEC designations. Livestock grazing and recreation use are the primary threats in these areas.

The Mud Flat Oolite ACEC would be increased from five acres to 1,468 acres (included in total acreage above). Management activities in the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC would remain unchanged. The Cottonwood Creek and Triplet Butte ACECs would be included in the Jacks Creek and Bruneau River proposed ACECs.

**Biological Soil Crusts** – The proposed ACEC would protect a rare, intact low elevation biological soil crust area and associated Wyoming big sagebrush and salt desert shrub communities. Management actions would focus on maintaining the integrity of the crusts by limiting impacts from recreation and livestock uses.

**Bruneau River** – The values protected in this proposal are similar to alternative B; however, the proposal provides a one-mile buffer from canyon rims providing more complete protection for bighorn sheep habitat and recreation values. Management actions are similar to alternative B; however, those actions that protect bighorn sheep and recreational values would include the one-mile buffer from canyon rims. Minimizing impacts to resources would be a priority in suppression of fires at upper elevations.

**Camas Creek/Pole Creek** – The values protected in this proposal are identical to alternative B. Management actions would provide greater protection from recreational impacts by not issuing new recreation permits and from livestock use by prohibiting new water developments.

**Castle Creek** – The values protected in this proposal include California bighorn sheep, redband trout, and three special status plant species. Management actions would eliminate OHMV use and restrict other recreation uses and water developments for livestock.

**Horse Hill** – The proposed area is identical and the management actions are similar to those described in alternative B.

**Jacks Creek** – The values protected in this proposal are similar to alternative B; however, the proposal provides a greater buffer for bighorn sheep habitat and more complete watershed protection. The proposal would also include representative lower elevation salt desert shrub communities and plateau areas that support representative big sagebrush communities in the headwaters of Big and Little Jacks creeks. Management actions would provide a degree of protection similar to alternative B, but would provide greater protection in from OHMV use in core bighorn sheep habitat. Minimizing impacts to resources would be emphasized in both fire suppression and rehabilitation efforts.

**Mud Flat Oolite** – The proposed area and management actions are identical to alternative B.

**Mulford's Milkvetch** – The proposed ACEC would protect several populations of Mulford's Milkvetch, a Type 2 special status plant that has the highest priority for conservation in the planning area. Recreational uses would be limited and OHMV use, livestock grazing, and mineral extraction would be eliminated in the proposed ACEC.

**Sugar Valley Badlands** – The proposed area is identical and the management actions are similar to those described in alternative B.

**Three Tables** – The proposed ACEC would protect a variety of cultural resources and representative shrub steppe plant communities. Mineral extraction would be prohibited and recreation uses and rangeland management improvements would be restricted or prohibited.

**Alternative D:** Proposed ACECs would include occupied and some suitable habitat for a variety of BLM sensitive plant and animal populations, some adjacent reference condition uplands, and cultural resources. Six new ACECs, including approximately 252,588 acres, would be established that include portions of the Bruneau River and Little Jacks, Big Jacks, Camas, and Pole Creeks. Protection of sensitive plant species is the primary reason for designating two ACECs (Horse Hill and Sugar Valley Badlands). The primary species that would benefit from ACEC designation include at least 15 special status plant species, California bighorn sheep, redband trout, and Bruneau hot springsnail. Paleontological and cultural resources would also benefit from ACEC designations. Livestock grazing and recreation use are the primary threats in these areas.

The Mud Flat Oolite ACEC would be increased from five acres to 1,468 acres (included in total acreage above). Management activities in the Owyhee River Bighorn Sheep ACEC remain unchanged. The Cottonwood Creek and Triplet Butte ACECs would be included in the Jacks Creek and Bruneau River proposed ACECs.

**Biological Soil Crusts** – The proposed area and management actions are identical to alternative C.

**Bruneau River** – The proposed area and management actions are similar to alternative C; however, the proposed withdrawal affecting the availability of locatable minerals would be limited to the canyon.

**Camas Creek/Pole Creek** - The proposed area and management actions are identical to alternative C.

**Horse Hill** – The proposed area is identical and the management actions are similar to those described in alternative B.

**Jacks Creek** – The values protected in this proposal are similar to alternative C; however, the buffers for bighorn sheep habitat and watersheds are smaller and occur primarily in upper elevations. The proposal would also include smaller areas of representative salt desert shrub communities and big sagebrush communities. Management actions would provide a degree of protection similar to alternative B.

**Mud flat Oolite** – The proposed area and management actions are identical to alternative B.

**Sugar Valley Badlands** - The proposed area is identical and the management actions are similar to those described in alternative B.

### 2.6.19.2National Trails

Less than ¼ mile of the Oregon National Historic Trail is located within the Bruneau Planning Unit, outside of the boundaries of the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Under all alternatives, the physical and visual integrity of visible remnants of the Trail would protected by following the recommendations of the Boise District's 1984 Oregon Trail Management Plan:

1. Manage lands within protective corridors along either side of visible remnants of the Oregon Trail so as to minimize surface disturbing activities. The width of the corridor would vary depending on topography and the presence of non-federal land and surfaced roads, but would average ¼ mile on either side of the historic ruts.
2. Withdraw lands within protective corridors from all forms of disposal and from mineral entry.
3. During wildfire suppression, avoid use of heavy equipment on historic Trail remnants or within the protective corridors if feasible. No parallel fire lines would be constructed within 1/8 mile of historic Trail remnants. If firelines must be constructed, construct them perpendicular to visible remnants, and rehab the disturbance so that it is unnoticeable within the protective corridor.
4. Within the protective corridor, utilize broadcast seeding, chains, or shallow-toothed harrows as an alternative to rangeland drills, where feasible. Under no circumstances should drilling occur within 100 feet of trail remnants.

### 2.6.19.3Wild and Scenic Rivers

**Common to All Alternatives:**

The *National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act*, (NWSRA) (Public law 90-542 and amendments), section 1(b) states that "certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." Section

10(a) describes the basic management requirement of protecting and enhancing the values that caused the river to be included in the NWSR system. BLM policy requires that all eligible rivers be evaluated for suitability. The determination of suitability in the RMP provides the basis for the decision to recommend that legislation be introduced in Congress to designate a river segment to the NWSR system.

Factors to be considered in determining suitability include: the current status of land ownership and use in the area; the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water that would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the NWSR system; and the values which other agencies, organizations or publics interested in designation or non-designation hold, administrative costs, ability of the agency to manage/protect the river area; historic or existing rights.

**Alternative A:** Manage the following suitable Wild and Scenic River segments to protect their outstandingly remarkable values:

- Bruneau River, Wild 40 miles;
- Owyhee River, Wild, 25 miles (Reservation boundary to Deep Creek;
- Sheep Creek, Wild, 21 miles;
- West Fork Bruneau, Scenic, 11 miles;
- West Fork Bruneau Wild, 20 miles;
- Deep Creek, Wild, 32 miles.

**Alternative B:** Same as Alternative A.

**Alternative C:** Manage river segments determined administratively suitable for designation as components of the NWSRS, as listed in Alternative A.

Recommend as suitable for designation the following eligible segments:

- Lower Yatahoney, Wild, 4 miles;
- Lower Battle Creek, Wild, 20 miles;
- Lower Dickshooter Creek, Wild, 12 miles;
- Pole and Camas Creek, Wild, 18.5 miles;
- Big Jacks Creek, Wild 33 miles;
- Little Jacks Creek, Wild 16 miles;
- Cottonwood Creek, Wild, 3 miles;
- Duncan Creek, Wild, 5 miles; scenic, 3 miles;
- Willies Creek, Wild, 1 mile.

**Alternative D:** Same as Alternative C.

### 2.6.19.4Wilderness

**Common to All Alternatives:**

Goal: Manage 332,092 acres of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the Bruneau Planning Unit so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness.

In 1981, as directed under Section 603 of FLPMA (Federal Land Management and Policy Act) BLM inventoried its lands for wilderness characteristics and identified 332,000 acres in the Bruneau Planning Unit as Wilderness Study Areas, eligible for consideration as wilderness. In 1991, the BLM State Director forwarded his recommendations for wilderness to the President. That same year, the President forwarded these identical recommendations to Congress. To date, Congress has not acted.

Wilderness characteristics and values as described in section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577), must be protected and enhanced in all WSAs, regardless of whether they have been recommended by BLM, the Department of the Interior, or the President for wilderness designation. Management of these WSAs relies on the direction of H-8550-1, *Interim Management Policy For Lands Under Wilderness Review.* This BLM handbook details how BLM can avoid impairment of each area's wilderness values.

Generally, those activities considered to be an impairment of wilderness values are those that result in new surface disturbance and cannot be immediately reclaimed, are noticeable to the average viewer, and detract from a WSA's identified values. Under all alternatives, WSAs will be managed so as to preserve the existing values of solitude, naturalness, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation experience, as well as any identified special features of WSA such as California bighorn sheep, redband trout, or other specified scenic, historical, ecological, scientific, educational and geological values.

Because of a change in Bureau policy in 2003, new wilderness study areas not originally identified under Section 603 of FLPMA cannot be subsequently identified during land use planning efforts under Section 202 of FLPMA, as was formerly the case. However, more recent policy clarifications have suggested that lands outside currently identified WSAs that possess wilderness qualities can have those values protected by means other than WSA status, (e.g. ACECs, SRMAs, or ROS classifications). Because of the recent policy clarifications, BLM has not had time to analyze proposals from citizens groups to protect additional acreage with wilderness characteristics, but that effort is now underway.

While Congress considers the final disposition of the WSAs, BLM would protect the wilderness values of the following WSA acreage within the Bruneau Planning Unit: (see Rec Map 3).

| | |
|---|---|
| Owyhee River Deep Creek: | 22,410 acres |
| Yatahoney Creek: | 5245 acres |
| Battle Creek: | 32,600 acres |
| Juniper Creek: | 7,295 acres |
| Little Jacks Creek: | 59,070 acres |
| Big Jacks Creek: | 54,833 acres |
| Duncan Crek: | 10,005 acres |
| Pole Creek: | 24,509 acres |
| Sheep Creek West: | 11,860 acres |
| Sheep Creek East: | 5,050 acres |
| Upper Deep Creek: | 11,510 acres |
| Bruneau River-Sheep Creek: | 79,537 acres |
| Jarbidge River: | 8,348 acres |

**Alternative A:** Under this alternative, if Congress releases any of the following WSAs from further consideration as wilderness, they would be managed under VRM Class II management objectives:

- Little Jacks Creek
- Big Jacks Creek
- Duncan Creek
- Owyhee River-Deep Creek
- Yatahoney Creek
- Juniper Creek
- Battle Creek
- Pole Creek

All other WSA acreage would revert to general management status.

**Alternative B:** Same as Alternative A.

**Alternative C:** Under this alternative, if Congress releases WSAs in the Bruneau Planning Unit from further consideration as wilderness, WSA acreage in the following WSAs would be managed under VRM Class I management objectives (allowing for only natural, ecological change):

- Little Jacks Creek
- Big Jacks Creek
- Duncan Creek
- Owyhee River-Deep Creek
- Yatahoney Creek
- Juniper Creek
- Battle Creek
- Pole Creek
- Sheep Creek West.

If Congress releases the remaining WSAs in the Bruneau, they would be managed under VRM Class II management objectives. These WSAs are:

- Upper Deep Creek
- Sheep Creek East
- Bruneau River-Sheep Creek
- Jarbidge River

**Alternative D:** Same as alternative C.

### 2.6.20 Social and Economic Conditions

#### 2.6.20.1Social and Economic

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA: P.L. 94-579) directs the Bureau of Land Management to manage the public lands for multiple use purposes. This includes the commercial and non commercial uses of natural resources for the welfare of the public and the environment.

**Alternative A:** Maintain current commercial activities on the Bruneau Resource Area as presently allocated.

Objective: Continue to provide opportunities for commercial utilization of natural resources at the current levels; this includes the commercial grazing of the public land, mineral utilization, and transportation and transmission corridors to maintain interstate and intrastate commerce, recreation opportunities and other potential developments to facilitate economic growth.

**Alternative B:** Maintain current commercial activities on the Bruneau Resource Area as presently allocated accompanied with restoration activities on the landscape.

Objective: Continue to provide opportunities for commercial utilization of natural resources at the current levels; this includes the commercial grazing of the public land, mineral utilization, and transportation and transmission corridors to maintain interstate and intrastate commerce, recreation opportunities and other potential developments to facilitate economic growth. Expend resources to improve the landscape and have an expanded presence on the Bruneau Resource Area.

**Alternative C:** Resource protection would take precedence over commercial activities and other non commercial human uses of the Bruneau Resource Area.

Objective: Fully protect natural resource values. Opportunities for commercial uses would be restricted or limited.

**Alternative D:** Expand commercial activities on the Bruneau Resource Area.

Objective: Maximize opportunities for commercial utilization of natural resources. Increased levels of utilization would be provided (new utility corridors, extensive OHV use, lands for disposal to local community, etc.).

### 2.6.20.2Hazardous Materials

**Common to All Alternatives:**

- Protect human health and safety and prevent environmental damage from hazardous materials.

**Objective:** Minimize the human health threats and natural resource risks from hazardous materials contamination and associated actions and reduce the occurrence and severity of hazardous material incidents.

**General Management Guidelines:** The Secretary's waste management initiative commits the BLM to reducing hazardous material situations on public lands. Federal agencies are required to comply with all federal and State laws, regulations and policies regarding hazardous materials on public lands. These include:

- Resource Conservation and Recover Act (RCRA), as amended 1976/1980 – 42 USC 6901f.
- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) 1980 – 42 USC 9601f.
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act) 1987 – 33 USX 1251-1387.
- Clean Air Act, as amended 1977/1990 – 42 USC 7418.
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act, as amended 1976 – 43 USC 1701f.

**Management common to all alternatives:**

- Reduce the occurrence of unlawful disposal of hazardous materials on public lands through education, law enforcement, and cost recovery.
- Utilize educational programs for public awareness on the impacts of hazardous materials on health and safety and the environment.
- Law enforcement would be utilized for investigation and apprehension which would aid in the cost recovery phase of these actions.
- All actions authorizing the use of or storage of, hazardous materials would have special stipulations developed as part of the permit, lease, or other actions to assure human and natural resource safety.
- Responses to hazardous material incidents would be timely and efficient with human safety the top priority.
- The hazardous materials program would be managed in the same general manner in all alternatives in accordance with policies, laws, and regulations. Consequently, the hazardous materials program will not be addressed again in other alternatives.